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# LETTERS

TO THE

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## CHRISTIAN PUBLIC,

CONCERNING

### UNSCRIPTURAL SPECULATIONS IN THEOLOGY.

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BY LEVI NELSON,

PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN LISBON, CONN.

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"Beware lest any man spoil you through Philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." COL. 2: 8.

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# LETTERS TO THE CHRISTIAN PUBLIC,

CONCERNING

## UNSCRIPTURAL SPECULATIONS IN THEOLOGY.

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### LETTER I.

JUDE, 3.—“BELOVED, WHEN I GAVE ALL DILIGENCE TO WRITE UNTO YOU OF THE COMMON SALVATION, IT WAS NEEDFUL FOR ME TO WRITE UNTO YOU, AND EXHORT YOU, THAT YE SHOULD EARNESTLY CONTEND FOR THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED UNTO THE SAINTS.”

PEACE is always desirable, if it be the right kind ; and if it be obtained and preserved in a right manner. Such is what the apostle calls, “the peace of God,” which is the effect of a new heart ; and this is the only kind of peace to be much depended on, in this depraved world.

A warfare of the spiritual kind has been carried on in the universe, ever since some of the angels rebelled in heaven. As soon as Satan enticed our first parents to partake of the forbidden fruit, it could be said in a more extraordinary sense than in the time of Job, “The earth is given into the hand of the wicked.” When the curse was denounced against the serpent, and Jehovah declared, that the seed of the woman should bruise his head, a war was proclaimed in this world, which has raged ever since ; and it will continue to rage, in some form, till the head of the serpent shall be effectually bruised. It is a war between holiness and sin—between truth and error. Christ is the leader on the side of truth and holiness. He has set up his righteous kingdom in the world in opposition to the kingdom of Satan, and he is known as the “Prince of Peace.” This title is most appropriate, inasmuch as nothing short of truth and holiness can lay the foundation for perfect peace. As there is no pure, holy peace, for any individual, till he is born of God, so there is no pure, holy peace in any kingdom but that which Christ has set up in the world.

It is important, however, to consider, that though Christ's kingdom is emphatically the kingdom of peace, yet as its holy principles come in contact with sin and error, its effect, till it subdues whatever opposes it, is not peace. It is necessary to bear this thought in mind in order rightly to understand the scriptures on this subject. Thus when our Saviour stated to Pilate the *nature* of his kingdom, (John 18 ; 36,) he said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews ; but now is my kingdom not from hence." In like manner, Paul said, (Rom. 14 ; 17,) "For the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." Accordingly the uniform representation in the scriptures of the prosperity of Christ's kingdom is that of great peace. Yet it is well known, that the Prince of Peace himself has given notice to the world, (Math. 10 ; 34-36,) "Think not I am come to send peace on earth : I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance with his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." Such are the first effects of the setting up of this kingdom of truth and righteousness, *wholly on account of the depravity of man*. His heart is opposed to the holy terms which are presented. Holiness is not to be blamed, nor is the Author of holiness to be blamed, for this warfare. The blame must forever rest on those who are unreconciled to truth and holiness. Here the desperate wickedness of the human heart shows itself. When the holy principles of the Saviour's kingdom come in contact with it, the fire is kindled. (See Luke 12 ; 49.) In accordance with this, we see why the Lord honored Phinehas (Num. 25,) by establishing *a covenant of peace* with him, after he showed such decision. Indeed the Lord honored him with an everlasting priesthood, in which he was a remarkable type of Christ, on account of his fidelity in endeavoring to establish peace on its proper basis, though it was at the expense of the lives of those who had been the wicked cause of the disturbance.

Since, then, on account of the wickedness of men, there are great and long continued contests in setting up the kingdom of peace on earth, we see why the scriptures so often make use of the language of human warfare, on this subject. Thus Christ is called the *Captain* of salvation. (Heb. 2 ; 10.) He is represented (Rev. 6 ; 2,) on a white horse with his bow, and going forth "conquering and to conquer." When Paul would show the importance of entire devotedness to Christ in the ministers of the gospel, he says, "No man that *warreth* entangleth himself with the affairs of this life ; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a *soldier*. (2 Tim. 2 ; 4.) Paul, speaking of himself and

his brethren, (2 Cor. 10: 4,) says, "The *weapons of our warfare* are not carnal." In exhorting his Ephesian brethren (6th chapter) to "be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might," he makes use of the different instruments of war which were the most common in those days, and spiritualizes them. In this way, Christians must put on the whole armor of God.

If I mistake not, the foregoing remarks serve to show the force of the passage at the head of this Letter,—“That ye should earnestly contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints.” The apostle Jude, in this passage, must have referred to the word of God as preached by him, and the other apostles, after the resurrection of Christ; and consequently we see how soon great and dangerous errors crept into the church. The book of Jude seems to have been a general epistle, directed to all the ministers and churches, to guard them against the errors and corruptions which were spreading far and wide; and they were called upon to act with decision. They must *earnestly contend* for the true faith. I trust no one believes, that the apostle intended the use of carnal weapons by this expression. He had been taught by Christ in person to be “wise as a serpent, and harmless as a dove;” and he doubtless desired, that all his brethren would walk by the same rule.

But this would be consistent with *contending earnestly*; otherwise an inspired apostle would not have given such a direction to the ministers and churches. The setting up of Christ’s kingdom, and its progress in this world of opposition to truth and righteousness, require both aggressive and defensive action. The command is plain that the gospel must be published to the nations—“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” Now it is well known, that though the apostles entered upon the execution of their commission, in the most harmless manner, they excited great commotions and tumults, on account of the desperate depravity of men, and the instigations of Satan. But here was no reason why they should not go forward. And it should never be forgotten, that the first establishment of the gospel, in any given place, does not end the contest. The same opposition to truth and holiness exists afterwards, so far as the depraved heart remains unsubdued; and consequently they must be defended in every way in which they are attacked. The “Captain of the Lord’s host” is too wise a commander to leave the stations he has acquired from the enemy without the means of defence. What use will there be in the conquest of whole kingdoms, if they are afterward left unprotected? Now the contending for the faith once delivered to the saints, necessarily implies, that this faith had been, in some measure at least, established; but that it was in danger of being lost, and that the greatest efforts were to be made to preserve it.



Is there not need of caution here, lest this essential part of the Christian warfare be neglected? The true faith being once established, is there no danger that we may feel too secure, as though it never could be uprooted? Is it not possible, that we may be misled even by our love of peace; and through fear of making unnecessary excitement, suffer error to creep in, and take an advantage over us, which we cannot reverse? The question about the necessity of religious controversy should not be settled by fancy, or by the opinions of "wise men after the flesh," but by what is actually going on in the kingdom of Christ. If the word of God is attacked wholly, or in part; if its great doctrines are undermined, and its precepts and institutions rejected; or if any thing is added to it as of superior or equal authority, its friends are bound to defend it without any apology for so doing. They must "earnestly contend for" all the truths it contains, nor silently suffer one of them to be rejected or cast into the shade, by the inventions of men. Can any duty be plainer than this? Hence there is no duty more strongly enjoined upon the disciples of Christ, than that they should watch. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." "What I say unto you, I say unto all, watch." "But this know, that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up."

If the question be, what is to be watched? the answer is ready. The soldiers of Christ, in common with the rest of mankind, have "hearts deceitful above all things;" and if they cease watching, they must expect to fall into sin, error and delusion. And in addition, they must watch the motions of their "adversary the devil," whose business is, "From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it;" and who, when men sleep, sows tares among the wheat, and goes his way. Thus every soldier of Christ must remember, that he must follow, and obey the commands of, the Great Captain of salvation, whether he is required to act *offensively*, or *defensively*. He must be willing to "endure hardness as a good soldier." Nor is he to calculate upon peace and security, (any more than the soldiers of an earthly commander,) till honorably discharged; and this, in his case, is only by death. He has no reason to expect he shall outlive the time, (unless he lives till the millenium,) when he may be called upon "*earnestly* to contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints."

"Ne'er think the victory won,  
Nor once at ease sit down;  
The arduous work will not be done,  
Till thou hast got thy crown."

## LETTER II.

2 COR. 10; 4, 5.—“FOR THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE ARE NOT CARNAL, BUT MIGHTY THROUGH GOD TO THE PULLING DOWN OF STRONG HOLDS, CASTING DOWN IMAGINATIONS AND EVERY HIGH THING THAT EXALTEETH ITSELF AGAINST THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, AND BRINGING INTO CAPTIVITY EVERY THOUGHT TO THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST.”

THESE words plainly teach us what is one of the great objects of the gospel ministry ; and they describe with perfect definiteness the boundary of all theological systems.  *Casting down imaginations.* All schemes of religion, not founded on the word of God, or on known facts in the works of creation and providence, are of course the inventions of men ; the works of imagination. It was an express object of the apostles to cast down these imaginations ; and so it should be of every minister of Jesus Christ : it is what Christ plainly demands. He demands it as expressly as he demands the surrender of our hearts. Indeed it is a part of such surrender.

*And every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God.* All species of philosophy, however ingeniously contrived and sustained, if they do not conform entirely to that knowledge of God which is obtained by searching the scriptures, are to be cast down, *totally rejected*, as the works of imagination. *And bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.* Obedience to Christ necessarily implies obedience to all his commands, faith in all his revealed will, and a desire to copy his example. The great object of every gospel minister should be, to make captive all the powers of the soul, *every thought*. Nothing should remain in us creating a desire to incorporate the least thing into our religion, or system of theology, which is not in complete subjection to the word of Christ. Hence the plain, direct, definite object of the gospel ministry, as it was established by the inspired apostles, discards entirely on religious subjects, all a priori propositions, positions, statements and reasonings, which are independent of the scriptures ; and all suppositions which are designed directly or indirectly, openly or secretly, to give shape to any part of theology. Also the ministry of the gospel as received from Christ, rejects entirely and forever, every “nature of the case,” every “nature of things,” all “philosophy of religion,” not founded on known and acknowledged facts, and every notion concerning any laws, *out of God*, or such as do not come directly under his government, and are not subject to his perfect control. and in any sense what-

ever, limit or restrict him from doing, in all respects, just as he pleases, in all worlds, in time and in eternity. Such self-contrived schemes, with all the reasonings by which they are sustained, and all the conclusions drawn from them, come under the denomination of that wisdom, which the apostle informs us the Greeks sought after, and which the whole tenor of his writings discountenances. It is the wisdom of this world, (1 Cor. 2 ; 6,) that cometh to nought. It was not the duty of the acute Greeks, nor any other heathen, while seeking to find out the chief good, to waste their time in establishing curious philosophical theories. Their business was to see and acknowledge the true God by his glorious works with which they were always surrounded. (Rom. 1 ; 20.) "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead ; so that they are without excuse."

These words clearly teach us, that had the heathen acted according to the light which the works of God afforded them, they would have understood what of him is the most essential to know—even his eternal power and godhead. In point of conspicuousness, therefore, *power* takes the lead of all Jehovah's attributes. This passage does not declare the heathen to be without excuse for not discerning the divine omniscience, or omnipresence, or any attribute of God but his power. How strange, then, and how lamentable, that any in this age of boasted wisdom, and with the bible in their hands, should attack the ability of God in their philosophical speculations ! This suggestion becomes more grave still, if we turn our attention to the Lord's prayer, wonderfully comprehensive, and of course the most essential ideas only, are selected. The ascription in the prayer is, "For thine is the kingdom, and the *power*, and the glory forever." Here, again, in another of the most essential portions of the sacred scriptures, *power* is the selected representative of Jehovah's attributes. This is not the work of chance. Such scriptural facts, abstracted from all other proof, are sufficient to render very suspicious the modern speculations on theology. Why do we hear about "a nature of things," never hinted at in the bible, but purely the invention of men, which subjects Jehovah to eternal restraints in his government of moral beings ? Why do we hear of laws, *out of God*, not under his control, which prevent him from doing as he would be glad to do ? All such teachings, all such insinuations, all such probable, or barely possible suppositions, all such inventions, demonstrate, that the contrivers and propagators of them, are, for some cause or other, unwilling to have all their imaginations, and every high thing in them which exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, cast down ; and to have every thought

of theirs brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. They are determined to break the sacred enclosure, and to teach men so.

The Lord's "green pastures," though very extensive, are a bondage to which they cannot submit, and they must leap into the Saharas of philosophy and vain deceit. If we intentionally depart a millionth part of a hair's breadth from the word of God, *we enter chaos*. We may as well call in question the knowledge of God as his power; the wisdom of God as his knowledge; the holiness of God as his wisdom, and the existence of God as his holiness. It is all out of book; and this consideration alone ought to silence the whole race of men. It does silence the angels of light. But "vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt." Any "nature of things," or other supposed laws, which are pretended to put Jehovah under the least restriction, are infinitely derogatory to him; they hoist man out of his proper place, and draw away every believer in them from the simplicity that is in Christ. They are an abandonment of Protestantism, which makes the sacred scriptures the only and sufficient rule of faith and practice; and they are an invitation to go back to the old house of bondage, which Luther and his coadjutors forsook. And when it is considered how tenaciously they are held and how zealously they are propagated among the youth by men of great influence; and that on the other hand there is an unaccountable indifference on the subject among many who do not profess to believe in them, nothing but the supposed near approach of the millennium inspires the hope that the dark ages will not return. This "nature of things," these laws *out of God*, which it is pretended he cannot control, are substantially the old heathenish doctrine concerning the fates, which the word of God utterly condemns.

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### LETTER III.

PSALMS, 135; 6.—"WHATSOEVER THE LORD PLEASED, THAT DID HE IN HEAVEN, AND IN EARTH, IN THE SEAS, AND ALL DEEP PLACES."

THIS is a declaration that the Lord was perfectly supreme over all worlds up to a certain time. Accordingly as he is absolutely unchangeable, he will do whatsoever he pleases in all worlds to all eternity. Such unlimited supremacy and independence in God, are as clearly and abundantly revealed in the bible, as any thing else pertaining to him.



By a little examination of the scriptures, more than forty distinct classes of texts may be found, which most unequivocally teach this glorious doctrine ; while each class contains as many as two texts, and most of them many more, on this fundamental point of all religion.

Now if we confine our thoughts to what God has said concerning his own *name*, we shall not want evidence of his absolute independence and unlimited supremacy over all worlds, in time and in eternity. In the third chapter of Exodus, where we read of the Lord's appearing to Moses in the burning bush near Mount Sinai, Moses was directed to go back to Egypt, and lead the children of Israel out of that place. " And Moses said unto God, when I come to the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, the God of your fathers hath sent me unto you, and they shall say unto me, what is his name ? what shall I say unto them ? " This was a very proper question for Moses to ask, for so the Lord treated it, by giving a prompt and decisive answer in the following words : " I AM THAT I AM : and he said, thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto thee. " We have here the most significant and the strongest expression, which language can employ to describe the self-existence, eternity, immutability, independence, supreme authority, and all-sufficiency of Jehovah. And it should not be forgotten, that this glorious name was not assumed merely for a particular occasion, for in the next verse it is added, " The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob hath sent me unto you ; this is my name *for ever*, and this is my memorial *unto all generations*. " Accordingly, many years afterwards, (Exodus 33,) when Moses besought the Lord to show him his glory, the Lord said to him, " I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee. " And what is the Lord's name now ? It is this, " And will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy. " Twelve or fourteen hundred years afterwards, the Lord, by the mouth of an inspired apostle, claimed the same name. (Rom. 9 ; 18,) " Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. " Theorizers would do well to remember, that God will never forget his name. " This is my name *forever*, and this is my memorial *unto all generations*. " The name of a being always indicates his character. This is true, whether the being has only one name, or many. Thus the character of him, whom we have been wont to call the father of his country, is always brought to view clearly, whether we call him Washington, George Washington, General Washington, or President Washington ; or whether we use the phrase, " The father of his country. " The same may be said in relation to all other beings. Accordingly, when we read those names in the bible, which we know are designed to

apply to the true God, we never need be at a loss to ascertain what they signify. Each one means just what is intended by, "I am that I am." Some of these names are, Jehovah, Lord, God, Creator, Father, Son, Holy Ghost, Spirit, Holy Spirit, Immanuel, Jesus, Christ, Saviour, Redeemer, Comforter, King, Judge. Also, there are many different terms and phrases in the bible which express the same name. Some of this description are the following. Most High ; High and lofty One ; King of kings ; First and the Last ; Alpha and Omega ; Almighty. That we may have *some* idea how often this glorious name is brought to view in the scriptures, it is ascertained, that in the Psalms alone, the words Lord, God, and Jehovah, occur more than 1200 times. Also, to the various terms and phrases in the bible, designating the great I AM THAT I AM, must be added all the personal, relative and adjective pronouns, which refer to this same infinite Being. In the hundred and thirty-sixth Psalm, which contains but twenty-six verses, this same self-existent, eternal, immutable, independent, supreme, all-sufficient God is clearly brought to view fifty times. It must be, then, that this venerable and fearful name, in one form or other, presents itself many thousands of times in the bible, and at each time, it is a solemn attestation to the whole world, of what Jehovah said of himself to Moses, **THIS IS MY NAME FOREVER.**

How weak, then, and insufficient, are all the attempts of men to destroy the unlimited independence of God ! He has thousands of witnesses at his command to annihilate all the babbling of worldly wisdom concerning the reality of such a nature of things, or of laws uncontrollable by him, as are brought forward to prove his weakness. Since we can know but little, why is it not best to confine our researches to what God has made accessible in his word and works ? Here alone is a field far more extensive than we shall explore in this life. And even if it were not so, it is better to exhaust the universe of truth before we enter the universe of fiction : for indeed all schemes founded on an unrevealed nature of things, or on laws which it is said Jehovah cannot control, are as purely fictitious as the novels and romances of this or any other age. This is a truth with which those ought to be acquainted, who hear from the pulpit on one Sabbath, a theology founded in fiction, and perhaps the next Sabbath are warned against tolerating fictitious writings on other subjects. The ministers of the gospel should be the last class of men to imitate Eve, who partook of the forbidden fruit, when she saw it was a "*tree to be desired to make one wise.*" She has had so many imitators in this respect among her descendants, that even if we were to confine our thoughts to this one view, there would be sufficient reason to believe, that a sinful bias, (original sin,) has descended from her.

## LETTER IV.

## THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

DEUT. 28 ; 58.—“THAT THOU MAYEST FEAR THIS GLORIOUS AND FEARFUL NAME, THE LORD THY GOD.”

EVERY attentive reader of the Bible must be struck with the special care of Jehovah to make us all deeply venerate his name. The words just quoted are near the close of that chapter, which contains a greater number of awful threatenings than any other chapter in the Bible ; and in such a connection, that they present the most awful, overwhelming sense of the infinite power and majesty and displeasure of God. Such a sense all the ancient saints had, whose writings or sayings form a part of the divine revelation. It will comport with the limits of this letter to select but a very few, among the numerous specimens found in the Bible. In the 13th chapter of Job, he reproves his three friends for what he considers their wrong doings, and says : “ Shall not his excellency make you afraid ? and his dread fall upon you ? ” In the same chapter, Job entreats Jehovah thus : “ Only do not two things unto me ; then will I not hide myself from thee. Withdraw thine hand far from me ; and let not thy dread make me afraid.” These views of God, which Job had, correspond with what he says of himself, Matthew, 1 ; 14 : “ For I am a great king, saith the Lord of Hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen.” So he intends the whole world shall view his name.

In the tenth chapter of Daniel, he had such a view of the Son of God, that he said : “ There remained no strength in me ; for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength.”

Isaiah had such a view of God in a vision, (Chap. 6.) that he exclaimed : “ Woe is me, for I am undone ; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips : for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.” And what else did he notice in this glorious vision ? It was the worship, which the seraphim, a high order of angels, paid to God. Nothing can exceed the reverence which they expressed. “ Each one had six wings : with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said : Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts ; the whole earth is full of his glory.” Now if this



*highest* order of holy angels, as is believed by many, if these *burning ones*, as their name imports, manifest such profound reverence and awe of God as to hide their faces with their wings and cry *one to another*, as though they dare not speak directly to Jehovah, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts ; the whole earth is full of his glory ;" how humble a place ought the sinful children of men to take before this glorious Being ; what exalting thoughts of him, and what abasing thoughts of themselves, ought they forever to entertain ; and how careful and respectful ought they to be in the choice of their words concerning him ! How much to be admired is the example of Sir Matthew Hale, whose reverence of God was such, that he was in the habit of making a pause both before and after he used a term which expressed that "glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD."

On the other hand, how far from scriptural reverence of God, is the language employed of late in hypothetical theology ! How much has been said, and preached, and written, to show the straits into which the Almighty is supposed to be thrown in his attempts to govern the universe as he would desire ! How much has been said to show what God cannot do, in relation to what he would do if he could !—that he has as much on hand as he can accomplish !—that he has done all he can do for sinners while they are remaining in impenitence !—that, at least, he has done all he can for them, up to the present time ! (Does any one know what is the use of such a qualification ?) There is such a contrast between all insinuations of Jehovah's inability, and the whole current of the Scriptures, embracing the reverence of the heavenly hosts, that every old-fashioned Bible Christian can be at no loss why all should be cautioned to "beware of philosophy and vain deceit."

It should never be forgotten that one form of irreverence leads on to another. I once heard a minister preach, who was "in the dizzy heights of" popularity. Before the sermon, I was expecting that the most solemn truths would be poured forth like a resistless torrent. But most of the sermon was very dry ; only the speaker took it upon him to point out God's duty in two or three particulars, as though God was but a humble hearer ! When philosophy and vain deceit are the order of the day, no one can conjecture how low the Sovereign of the universe will be put down. Thus whole classes of theological students, who are preparing to become pastors and missionaries, gather around the professor's chair, that they may be initiated into all the depths and heights of the modern improvements in theological science ; and they hear it gravely announced, that in a certain case, "*man is the giant and God is the child !*" How a professedly Christian community can

endure to hear the infinite God of all their hopes insulted to this degree, is beyond my comprehension. What less can be expected than that a fatal blight will seize upon the churches that wink at such instructions?

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## LETTER V.

### THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

EXODUS, 20; 7.—“THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD THY GOD IN VAIN; FOR THE LORD WILL NOT HOLD HIM GUILTLESS THAT TAKETH HIS NAME IN VAIN.”

It seems that those who have advanced the most exceptionable views concerning Jehovah, profess at the same time, to adopt the Westminster Catechism for their creed. In that excellent summary of Christian doctrine, are the following questions and answers. Q. “Which is the third commandment? A. The third commandment is, Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. Q. What is required in the third commandment? A. The third commandment requireth the holy and reverend use of God’s names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word and works.” Query: Is it anything akin to a holy and reverend use of God’s names, titles and attributes, to represent him as being put into straits and difficulties as his ignorant, dependent creatures are? To represent him as not doing all the good he desires, while he does all the good he possibly can? To represent him as being necessarily under the control of *the nature of things, or of laws out of himself*? Is it anything akin to a holy and reverend use of God’s names, titles and attributes, to represent him in a given case to be as far beneath man as a child is beneath a giant?

Q. “What is forbidden in the third commandment? A. The third commandment forbiddeth all profaning or abusing of anything whereby God maketh himself known.” Taking the Scriptures for my guide, if God’s name has not been profaned and abused in a revolting and shocking manner, by modern theorizers, then I must confess my ignorance of the use of language.

Again. In answer to the question, “What is God?” the catechism, among other things, says: “he is infinite in power.” The definition of *infinite*, if we adopt Webster’s Dictionary for our standard, is,

“without limits; unbounded; boundless; not circumscribed; applied to *time, space and qualities.*” Is it then, a holy and reverend use of God’s infinite power, to limit it, to bound it, to circumscribe it? To put man, in a specific case, in point of ability, as much above God as a giant is above a child? What can be more inconsistent with a belief in the Westminster Catechism? Where is there a professedly Christian catechism which matches such irreverent use, such abuse, of any one of Jehovah’s attributes?

When the ministers of the gospel come forward publicly, in the most responsible circumstances, and solemnly declare their belief in the infinite power of God, we have a right to expect that they understand and mean just what they say; that they declare Jehovah’s power to be unlimited, unbounded, boundless, not circumscribed; that they intend to put at rest all questions upon this subject forever. That degree of confidence in them, which is essential to Christian charity, and which is essential even to hold society together, forbids us to doubt their sincerity and their determination consistently to carry out their profession. What, then, must we think, if they inform us that “the power of God must be limited somewhere? That God cannot so alter the nature of things as to make two and two, any number but four; or, that the whole of a thing shall not be greater than a part? That he cannot cause the same thing to be and not to be at the same time; and the like? Of all this we know *nothing*. And what if we did? There is no more connection between such impossibilities, (if indeed they are impossibilities,) and what God would be glad to accomplish, than there is between any other things which are totally remote from each other. But even if there were such a connection, as some philosophers claim, it cannot change the meaning of words. Hence it is clear in my mind, that the man who declares his belief in the infinite power of God and yet enters into such speculations as I have noticed, sets at naught his religious creed, so far as one of Jehovah’s essential attributes is concerned; and is responsible for the imposition practiced upon an honest community anxious to know what he really believes. Nor does it lessen the fault to pretend, that his speculations are nothing but suppositions. What have we to do with suppositions, which call in question the truth of any point, after we have given our unqualified assent to it, and in the most responsible circumstances? This appears to me, to be a most uncalled for trifling with a creed—a declared insincerity, startling to hypocrisy itself. What is a religious creed worth, and what is it for, if it regards neither the current of the sacred Scriptures, nor the meaning of words according to standard authors? Especially, if its signers disregard the meaning of a word of so much consequence

as *infinite*? To call Jehovah infinite, and then limit him; to assert as an essential part of a creed, that he is a Being of infinite power, and then set all their ingenuity to work, to show what he cannot do in relation to what he would do if he could, though sanctioned or winked at by great names, is at war with all reverence of God, and even with literature itself. Finite creatures limiting infinite power, and telling what it cannot do!

I have hitherto believed in the importance of creeds. But if such is to be the result of them, then away with them forever. Nothing at the present day has so much deceived the public mind on theology, as the professed belief of some distinguished men, in the Westminster Catechism, who at the same time are supposing, and guessing, and insinuating, and reasoning, against one of the fundamental principles of that venerable creed—I mean, of course, the infinite power of God. What if (as I have seen) strenuous attempts are made to prove the consistency between modern speculations and that confession of faith, by the mere dint of metaphysical skill?—A method which some trust in to prove anything and everything and nothing, as they please! This by no means satisfies the common sense of the public. They want the truth conveyed to them, according to the daily use of language, without chicanery. But least of all do they desire, that those who are set to defend morals and religion, should so use words as to appear profane to sober sense, and triflers with what they profess to believe in, and then virtually father it on to the Westminster Catechism! Our Puritan ancestors, who are our own boast for soundness of belief and excellency of character, would not have discovered the least consistency between New Divinity and the Westminster Catechism, had they studied them ten thousand ages. This we may know by what they have published; for the whole tendency of their representations of God was to place him on the throne, in a sense directly contrary to the tendency of modern speculations. The schemes of the old believers in the Westminster Catechism, and of modern theorizers diverge farther and farther, and will continue to do so forever.



## LETTER VI.

PROVERBS, 20; 25.—“IT IS A SNARE TO THE MAN WHO DEVoureTH THAT WHICH IS HOLY : AND AFTER VOWS TO MAKE INQUIRY.”

A vow is a promise made to God that we will do something for him. It is, therefore, a snare to any one to vow, and afterwards to be dissatisfied, and desire to be released from the obligation which the vow imposes ; or to give a more liberal explanation of it, than the terms in which it was expressed naturally imply. A profession of our faith in God lays us under the obligation of a vow ; and it is equally a snare to us to recant, or to explain it differently from what the words naturally express. For example ; if we publicly profess to believe in the infinite power of God, we bring ourselves into a snare, not only by asserting that this power must be limited, so that we may build a theory on its limitation, but also if for this purpose we raise a *possible supposition* on the subject. A supposition in such a connection necessarily implies *doubt, uncertainty* ; and if we make it on the side of limiting God's power, after we have declared in our creed, that his power is infinite, we are like him, who after vows makes inquiry. If a man declares his belief in the infinite power of God, as a part of his religious creed, and raises the least doubt about it afterward by the name of possible supposition, he as really breaks his pledge, as though he positively denied such part of his creed ; and he must be responsible for this breach of promise. Accordingly it is not in the least satisfactory to hear those who have adopted the Westminster Catechism attempt to excuse themselves for doubting whether God may have been able to prevent sin, because they say it is only a possible supposition. What if it is nothing but a possible supposition ? It is a doubt about the truth of what they have declared they fully believe. This must of course destroy confidence in what they had said as being their positive belief. Take any other doctrine, say, the Divinity of Christ. If a minister should raise the supposition that Christ may not be God, after he had signed the common orthodox creed on this subject, he would immediately lead his brethren to doubt his soundness in the faith. The same may be said in relation to all other doctrines, and to the truth of divine revelation. Such a person is at least unsettled in his mind, in relation to whatever doctrine he institutes a possible supposition, He doubts what his creed declares is his positive belief ; and it is

impossible for one who understands the subject, to view and trust him in any other light than as unsettled, not established in the faith of the gospel.

Thus he not only brings himself into a snare, but those also who confide in him as one who has a positive belief in the truths of his creed. There certainly is a deception, whether it be designed or not. Such is the conclusion to which I have found myself obliged to arrive, by the most careful examination I have been able to make of the speculations of the Theological Professors at Yale College. This has been my conviction for many years. It should be observed, also, that this deception is become peculiarly injurious, because the Professors have made so much of the supposition, that God may not have been able to prevent sin in a moral universe. One of them has declared that the belief, that God *is* able to prevent sin, leads to Universalism, Infidelity and to Atheism ; and the other Professors have expressed no dissent from this opinion. Let it never be forgotten, that such is the result of believing in a possible supposition, which the Professors declare is consistent with a belief of the infinite power of God ; while no one doubts that all believers in the Westminster Catechism, till the Professors came upon the stage, took it for granted, that God was able to prevent all sin, had he so pleased, and yet have a moral system.

As I have been painfully convinced for a long time, that such hypothetical speculations, with the confusion they bring, are very injurious to the cause of truth and godliness, I proposed to Professor Goodrich and his colleagues, some time ago, the following question : “ *Has God a perfect control over the hearts of all moral beings ?* ” I thought this was the sure test question,—that there could be no evasion. If God has a perfect control over the hearts of all moral beings, then they do not stand in the way of his doing in all respects just as he pleases. So far as obstructing him is concerned, they are mere cyphers. Their free agency can no more stand in his way than any thing else. He can have as entire control over them in one place as in another ; at one time as well as at another ; in one world as well as in another :—and he can make all their combined agencies and influences as completely subservient to him, as the agency of one. Great numbers can make no difference. All this is necessarily implied in the affirmative of this question. I designed there should be no loop-hole for any possible supposition to creep in ; neither do I believe that anti-partyism would ever dream of any place for the least possible doubt.

In due time I received an answer from Professor Goodrich, in which he stated without the least hesitation, and in full terms, his belief in the affirmative of this question, and went to the bible and to orthodox creeds

to show his correctness. In my next letter to him I say, "Your answer would be entirely satisfactory to me, were it not for the supposition which you and your colleagues have maintained, *that God may not have been able to prevent sin in a moral universe*. This supposition calls in question the very ability which you say Jehovah possesses, and therefore I cannot comprehend you. A supposition, as you use it, necessarily implies *doubt, uncertainty*. It is therefore to me exceedingly strange, that you should state this fundamental truth as what you positively believe, without the least reserve, but still hold to a supposition which makes this very article of faith doubtful. In your writings, in connection with those of your colleagues, we find it possible, probable, and highly probable, that God may not have been able to prevent sin; and you reason as though you really believe in this inability in God. Yea, you point out the shocking consequences of believing that God *could* have prevented sin. Now, if as you state in your letter, God *has* perfect control over the hearts of all moral beings, then he certainly *can prevent sin whenever he pleases*. There is no mistake." "Neither can I believe you have any more authority for instituting a supposition against Jehovah's ability, than against his moral character, or his existence. And if some skeptic like David Hume, should start up, and take that advantage of religion which your writings give, he would cut out work for ministers other than to *suppose things* against the almighty power of God." "I stated in my letter to you, that your answer to the question, 'Has God the perfect control over the hearts of all moral beings?' would be very important to me. I did not conceive it possible, that after you so well knew my trouble about your hypothetical speculations, you would promptly answer the question in the affirmative, but give no intimation that you had renounced your supposition. Is it possible, Sir, that you can answer this question in the affirmative, without suggesting the least qualification, and still hold to the supposition, and the various deductions derived from it? Such a proceeding seems to me no better than it would be to declare in a court of justice, under oath, that a certain thing is true; but away from the court, to express doubts concerning the truth of it, and even labor to convince every body, that the thing is not true, and point out the shocking consequences of believing it."

This last sentence gave Dr. Goodrich great offence. He thought I did as much as to make him a perjurer.

Here, then, is a full admission on his part that while he declares positively, that God has a perfect control over the hearts of all moral beings, he *has* instituted a supposition against this positive belief, and *has* drawn various conclusions from it. If he had not done thus, he certainly would have denied the application to himself. I do not hesitate to say,



that such a course would be perjury *in me*, according to the views I have entertained from my youth. When I was licensed to preach, and when I was ordained, I considered the confession of faith I made to those who licensed, and those who ordained me, to be a declaration, in point of obligation, equal to any oath which can be administered—that there are no circumstances in life, which can bind a man stronger to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, of what he believes; and that the consequences of failing to do thus, cannot be more serious in a civil court, than when put into the ministerial office, by those who feel the responsibility of performing the act in a right manner. If two candidates for ordination should own the same creed before an ecclesiastical council, and one of them should admit, that there is room for a supposition against what he has stated, would the council consider these cases one and the same? They certainly would not; and especially if the one who instituted the supposition should reason upon it, and draw conclusions as though it were true. Neither would any of our judges or juries in the state's courts, or in the courts of the United States, consider these cases one and the same. If any person should doubt my correctness on this point, I would ask, why is a supposition attached to any part of a creed, if it is not designed to have any effect? In such a case, it would be mere trifling. And if the design of the supposition be to alter, or modify the creed in the least possible degree, then the creed is a different one from that which has no supposition attached to it. This conclusion is inevitable.

I here repeat what I have written to Dr. Goodrich, that “if the New Haven Professors really believe, that a supposition attached to an article of faith produces no alteration in it, or has no effect upon it, why should they have any thing to do with it? And if they believe that a supposition *does* change or modify any article of their faith, in the least possible degree, they are bound by the law of God, as honest men, more especially as professing christians and ministers of the gospel, and most of all as Professors of Theology, to give their readers and hearers and pupils distinct notice of such change or modification.” I now add, that I know of no occurrences of life, in which the question of honesty is more manifestly involved. The suffering public are not to be put off about this. It is a case too palpable and urgent to inquire about standing, office, or influence, or whatever goes by the name of human authority. It is a question which involves the common principles of honesty. Yet if I rightly understand Dr. Goodrich, he must have a possible supposition attached to his creed, let consequences be what they may. In his letter to me dated Nov. 30, 1848, he says, “God no doubt by changing the

course of his providence, and bringing more powerful influences to bear on any part of his system, might effectually secure it against the out-breaking of sin. But no created mind is adequate to decide what effect would have been produced in other portions of the universe, by such a departure from the system he has chosen." What created mind then has any business with this subject? Again, Dr. Goodrich says, "In the language of Dr. Porter, of Farmington, if the mighty works which were done in Capernaum had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented; but what would have been the general consequence in the history of the world is unknown to us." What business, then, has Dr. Porter with the subject? But he goes on, "Doubtless the Creator might have prevented the access of the tempter to our first parents, or have revealed his true character; or by a divine influence have prevented the yielding to his insinuations. But can we be certain, that to have broken the force of the temptation, in this way, would not have begun a train of events, leading inevitably to a more hopeless rebellion?"—(Chris. Spec. 1829, p. 381.) Dr. Goodrich goes on to quote sentences of a similar import, from Rev. S. R. Andrews, of Woodbury. Now the misery is, that these gentlemen should hunt up notions of which they do not pretend to know any thing, in order to fabricate a possible supposition, which must of course be of great consequence to them in a system of theology! Is this the way that the ministers of the gospel are to amuse the world, while their ordination vows are upon them to deal with God's truth, and not with the fictions of their own brains? O emptiness, emptiness! Is it the way to spread their metaphysical web to catch, not flies; but

"A shadow of a shadow's shade,"

and so tinge their theology with it, as to help the word of God out of its supposed troubles, and as a recompense for such prodigious aid, oblige the sacred word to become subservient to worldly wisdom? It is my full belief, that the honest, unsuspecting community have been imposed upon by mischievous hypothetical speculations, ever since Dr. Taylor preached the "*Concio ad clerum*," in 1828. A supposition is instituted and incessantly urged, which is totally unknown in creeds, but which is made essential to a system of theology. Those who adopt it can declare before God and the world, that God is infinite in power, and that he has a perfect control over the hearts of all moral beings; yet they hunt up, talk about, and work in, a possible supposition; or a "you cannot prove the contrary;" or a "who knows but that," &c. &c., which as really changes the character of the creed, as any form of words can do it, and which of course is expressly designed for this purpose.

Is it possible that such men and those who sympathize with them can flatter themselves that the religious public will be forever quiet while caught in this snare? They may as well expect that the eruptions of Etna will be subservient to their dictates. They must themselves quench the fire they have kindled, or it will burn. God will raise up, not only those who believe that his word ought to be kept pure from the contrivances of man, but who will defend it from all anti-Protestant machinations, or they will, like many of their brethren now in heaven, seal their testimony with their blood. And their efforts will be crowned with success. The millennium will not commence till God's word shall emerge from the eclipse of all possible suppositions to weaken its holy truths; nor till men shall be afraid to attack Jehovah's ability, after they have solemnly, before God and his church, assented to a creed which defends it. The heart sickens at so great an appearance of duplicity and faithlessness. Such things have not been expected in the ministers of the gospel, and those of high standing; and it is probable some people will remain incredulous from the fact that these things seem too monstrous to be believed. Hence, no doubt, has arisen the great backwardness of many to draw the curtain aside, and let the community see, what must and will be seen, when the means shall be laid before it without disguise. A company of theologians of great name, acting a part in concert, which carries the appearance of a complete hoax of long standing, and far the biggest that has ever been practiced in our country since it was settled! It is no light thing to impose upon an honest unsuspecting community in this manner. Many feel deeply injured by it, and common frankness impels some, at least, to state things just as they are, nor will they be charmed or panic struck at the evolutions and contortions, and tergiversations and quibbles of "the philosophy of religion."

The reader will not forget, that long quotations made in this letter, are taken verbatim from my letter to Dr. Goodrich, which he has since answered. In his answer he says, "You do not pretend that I misunderstood your question, or that my answer, yes, does not meet every point you contemplated. And yet you are not satisfied." How could Dr. Goodrich say so, when, as the reader has seen, I said to him, "Your answer would be entirely satisfactory to me, were it not for the supposition which you and your colleagues have maintained, that God may not have been able to prevent sin in a moral universe." Did I not pretend, that the answer, "yes," does *not* meet every point I contemplated? I *did* pretend that Dr. Goodrich's answer did *not* meet every point I contemplated; and in language which I never thought any body would mistake. I said, "Your answer would be entirely satisfactory

to me, WERE IT NOT FOR THE SUPPOSITION," &c. Is here not an exception, and as plain a one as Dr. Goodrich could make himself? I ask again, and I do it with pain, How could Dr. Goodrich assert, that I did not pretend but that his answers met every point? "*And yet you profess not to be satisfied.*" Yes, Dr. Goodrich may rest assured, that I was not satisfied. I am not ashamed to own it. How can I be satisfied when Dr. Goodrich assures me, that he fully believes God has a perfect control of the hearts of all moral beings, while he keeps up a supposition, *which makes this very declaration doubtful?* This I have clearly proved. Dr. Goodrich then proceeds, "And *why* are you not satisfied?" (He answers the question himself.) "Simply and solely because you cannot see how my answer is *consistent* with a certain 'supposition' of ours to which you object. But are you infallible in your discernment on subjects?" I am not satisfied, Dr. Goodrich, and it is because you seem determined to make me believe, that it is precisely the same creed *with, or without*, a supposition attached to it. I ask Dr. Goodrich again, and I should be glad if my question could be heard from Maine to California, and from California to the mouth of the Columbia, why the Theological Professors at Yale College should introduce, and hold on to their famous "supposition," if they mean nothing by it—if it has *no* effect upon their religious creed? Is an article of faith precisely the same, whether it be expressed *positively*, without any modification and reserve; or whether some doubt or uncertainty belongs to it; and especially when this doubt or uncertainty takes a start, occasionally, and calls in the aid of positive declarations, and points out the horrible consequences of believing contrary to its dictates? Are what is positive and what is doubtful, one and the same thing? But because I believe they are not one and the same thing, Dr. Goodrich asks me, "Are you infallible in your discernment on subjects?" Yes, Dr. Goodrich, if to distinguish between those things, which you and your colleagues have labored for years to make distinct, is a mark of infallibility, then I am infallible. I know that two are not one, and that one is not two. Does this knowledge make me infallible?

Dr. Goodrich's glaring misstatement induces me to make some further remarks. It has ever been a matter of conscience with me in opposing others, to avoid all misrepresentations. This was my object in my printed Letter to the Professors at Yale College. How I succeeded may be known by the following facts. Dr. Goodrich and myself have, as the reader has perceived, had a written correspondence. In a lengthy letter from him, in which he has expressed great displeasure against me for my plainness of speech to him in one of my letters, he reviewed some points in my printed letter. In concluding that part of his letter he says,



"I have answered, as I believe, every argument in your printed letter.' But in all this review he did not so much as hint at any misrepresentation on my part, as I can find. This silence, when he was exceedingly displeased with me for what he considered my *discourteous treatment* of him, is sufficient proof *that all my statements were fair, as all statements ought to be.*

I deem it wholly proper to add, that Dr. Goodrich is not the only one of the New Haven Professors who has misrepresented me. I have it from what I deem good authority, that one of the Professors has said to this effect, *that my thoughts on the Origin of Sin, in my printed Letter, are as much a philosophical theory, as what I condemn in the writings of the Professors.* It is understood also, that this opinion has been echoed in the state, from the infallible head-quarters. Now any person who reads my printed Letter to the Professors, must find on page 73, where I first intimated my intention to introduce what I thought would be "some improvement in *Bible Theology*," that I was perfectly explicit—showing that whatever scheme I might broach, I hoped would be immediately overset, if it could not be sustained by the word of God; and in this connection I introduced the sweeping passage, "To the law and the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Now, if the reader of my printed Letter, will turn to pages 80 and 81, he will there find the book, chapter, and verses on which *I profess* to found my views concerning the Origin of Sin, whether correct or not; and in other places he will find some of the passages, (among others which I could have introduced,) to sustain my Bible, *not* philosophical, views. And yet there is an attempt making by a Professor of Divinity in Yale College, if I am not misinformed, to fasten the absurdity upon me, of introducing a merely philosophical scheme, like the Professors, after I had been strenuously opposing them for so doing!

Without different light from any I can yet obtain, I must think, that these Professors would not dare treat a ministerial brother as they have treated me, if they did not believe themselves to be above human responsibility. Such gross misstatements and misrepresentations show the badness of a cause wonderfully. But they teach us what is more serious, still—they point us to the ninth commandment,—“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.”

It is my belief, that the unenviable position of the Professors might have been prevented, if after they had professed the orthodox creed, with all the solemnity of a vow, they had not been disposed to make inquiry, by means of a non-committal supposition. This has brought them into a snare, from which they can never extricate themselves, by

“a dignified silence,” or by misrepresentations, or by a violation of the decalogue.

I fully believe the bible, and all the doctrines it contains, to be true ; that is, I believe them to be true without a possible supposition to raise any doubt on the subject ; and that it is the indispensable duty of all to ground their theological views entirely upon them as illustrated by God’s works of creation and providence. On the other hand, I as fully believe it is wrong, and that it is charging God and his word foolishly, to introduce into our religious belief, any fancies, surmises, conjectures, may-bes, suppositions, nature of things, laws out of God not under his perfect control, and all pretended philosophy not founded on known and generally acknowledged facts ; and whatever propositions, or dogmas, maxims, or first principles create these conjectural things, or are created by them.

If I am in an error in these statements, or in any others made on these sheets, I respectfully and seriously invite whoever may please, to over-set my arguments by the bible, if they can ; and I will do all in my power to disprove any accusations which may be brought against them, as though they were “contentious,” wished to disturb the peace, or “to prolong controversies ;” and if they succeed to convince me, I will rank them among my greatest benefactors. But if no scriptural efforts to overthrow my positions are sent to me within a reasonable time, I shall take it for granted that no one dares to make the attempt ; and let the pens and tongues and hearts of those I feel it my duty to oppose, be silent forever on the subject, except to recant, and repair, as far as they can, the injury which their unhappy speculations have inflicted on the cause of Christ.

NOTE.—A copy of this Letter, and of all the preceding ones except the first, was sent abroad for several months, as the writing on the cover showed, for the express purpose of soliciting a reply on scripture principles ; but none has been made. And what was this for ? I have no private ends to accomplish. It as deeply concerns others as myself, whether we give the word of God its proper place in our theology. It seems rather strange, that while I appeal to that infallible standard against New Divinity, no one comes forward to correct my errors, if I have advanced errors on the subject. I ask such freedom as a favor. Both Old and New Divinity must stand or fall by the Bible. Who does not know this ? If I have mistaken the meaning that infallible standard, is there no one willing to set me right ? No good Samaritan to have compassion upon me ?

As I have given as fair opportunities as I have been able for any one to overthrow my refutation of New Divinity by the bible if he can ; and as I have invited, and challenged it, without effect, I come to the conclusion, and I have a right to do so, that no one dares to attempt it. I say this, not to prove myself infallible—not by way of boasting, as though I were superior or equal to many others, who, if they

had seen fit to take the ground I have taken, would have performed a better service than I have done. But I say it to show, that there is a consciousness in the contrivers and leaders in New Divinity that it will not stand the test of the bible. Yet strange to tell, it was not many weeks after my Letter to the Theological Professors at Yale College was published, before a professedly religious periodical came out against the Letter and its author, not by argument, but by ridicule! I notice this simply to show the awfully corrupt state of public sentiment; for no editor would have dared to take this ground, if he had not believed that New Divinity was forever established.

This is a very painful consideration, but one with which the Christian public ought to be made acquainted. Whoever reads the Letter which I addressed to the Professors, must perceive, that my great object was to subject the speculations of these gentlemen on the fundamental doctrines of religion, to the test of God's holy word. This, I believe, no one will dare deny. Now, if there had been an attempt at argument, though unsatisfactory; and if there had been an attempt at wit *with* such argument, the case would have been different. But for a man to be attacked with wit and ridicule, without the shadow of argument, and from a professedly religious source, merely because he is determined to hold wild speculators to the word of God, savors of any thing rather than of Christian sobriety, and an attachment to serious religion. When the scoffers and infidels of the last century took such ground against the word of God, those who defended it said that jestings and wit and ridicule were not argument. I had thought, that the professed advocates of the bible in the present age, had *learned this lesson*; especially those who *would* be prominent theologians, and *would* take it upon them to guide public opinion. The serious, enlightened, straight-forward course of the fathers in Connecticut, gave respect and dignity to theology. But these qualities, "as a brook, and as the stream of brooks, pass away." This must be the case so long as a hypothetical theology claims to take the place of unflinching Puritanism, and is defended by such weapons as infidels have been wont to use in their attacks upon the word of life. This mode of defence is usually in keeping with the cause defended.

Oh! What has become of that universal jealousy for the plain, positive truths of God's holy word, which was formerly so conspicuous in Connecticut? A dreadful responsibility rests somewhere! If any one had told me thirty years ago that things would ever come to such a pass, especially in my day, it seems to me I should have thought him a fair candidate for bedlam.



## LETTER VII.

## HYPOTHESES OR SUPPOSITIONS.

ROMANS, 14; 23.—“AND HE THAT DOUBTETH IS DAMNED IF HE EAT, BECAUSE HE EATETH NOT OF FAITH; FOR WHATSOEVER IS NOT OF FAITH IS SIN.”

It is not my intention to give a minute comment upon these words; but we necessarily find this truth in them, that doubts, when standing in the way of faith, are bad and dangerous things. Hence, the more free our religion is from doubts, the better. But hypotheses or suppositions always imply *doubt, uncertainty*; and show that the mind is unsettled on any doctrine, concerning which a supposition or hypothesis is instituted. Though it may be our prevailing belief that the Bible is the word of God, yet if we institute a supposition on the subject, we virtually declare that our minds are unsettled in relation to the truth of divine revelation. The same may be said in relation to any doctrine or duty which is supposed to be found in the Bible. Thus if we institute a possible supposition that God may not have been able to prevent sin, we show at once, that we are not established in the belief that he has such perfect control of the hearts of all moral beings as establishes the doctrine of his supreme independence.

But it is important to inquire when an hypothesis or supposition may be used with propriety. One occasion is, when we give our opinions with moderation and care. Thus it is common to say, “*we suppose*” that such a thing is true, or not true, as the case may be. In the next place, a supposition is useful to illustrate truth. The parables of Christ are implied suppositions. Something is imagined to be true, to make what *is* true appear more vivid. Again: Hypotheses or suppositions are often used in our investigations of the truth in the sciences; and are simply the means which are employed to obtain an object. No doubt Copernicus first instituted the hypothesis that the world might be round; and by investigating the subject on this principle, he finally proved the fact. It appears, also, that suppositions are used in certain mathematical rules, as the means of coming to the true results. In the rule of Position, certain numbers are *supposed*, to assist the student to perform the sum. But in all such cases, the hypotheses or suppositions are designed only as *the means to obtain the end and not as the end itself*. The same may be said concerning instituting a supposition to ascertain

the meaning of an obscure passage of Scripture. We never ought to make such a passage a part of our creed, till we get further than to *suppose it may* be so. If the Bible were an uncertain book, its meaning, or origin, or both, doubtful; the case would be essentially different. But such doubtful belief, or rather doubting, was not the faith of the Puritans of New England; and it is strange enough that an attempt should be made, and stranger still, that such an attempt should be countenanced, to introduce a hypothetical theology, and pretend that it is a desirable improvement upon the positive, straight-forward, scriptural belief of our fathers. So far from being progressive, it is clearly a retrograde movement. Indeed, it implies a rebuke to such men as the Edwardses, and Bellamy, and Hopkins, and Strong, and Dwight, and a host of others, for believing *positively*, what their creed taught them; for their creed was the same as that which is now professed by those who have reserved the right of supposing against it. While it is not pretended, that we can so well understand the Bible as to form a positive conclusion concerning everything contained in it, we certainly ought to be fully persuaded concerning those leading doctrines, which compose our creed; and all doubting here is a reflection cast upon the Bible and its great Author, for pretending to give us a sufficient revelation.

Another extremely unpleasant circumstance attending the New Divinity supposition is, it is made to perform the part of slanderous insinuations against the character of God. We have already seen, that according to the Westminster Catechism, "the third commandment forbiddeth all profaning or abusing of anything whereby God maketh himself known." Now every one knows, that an attack upon any divine attribute is profaning and abusing it; and it may, with perfect propriety be added, that it is as evil in the sight of God, to call in question his almighty power, as his holiness.

To this remark it may possibly be objected, that power is only a natural attribute of God; but holiness pertains to his moral character; and accordingly, though it may be wrong to call in question a moral attribute of God, it may not be wrong to call in question the extent which some attach to his natural attribute of power. But we should remember that it is man, not the Bible, who makes this distinction between the natural and moral attributes of God. According to the Bible, both classes of the divine attributes are equally sacred; and this is the view which the Assembly of Divines took of the subject. It does appear to me, that if this thought had occurred to the contrivers of New Divinity, their courage would have failed them. If they had considered, that for aught that appears in the Bible, it is as wicked to doubt Jehovah's ability as his holiness, they would have preferred to

have the palsy seize their hands before they could record what they *have* recorded concerning what Jehovah cannot do in relation to what he would do if he could. I have never had but one opinion about such speculations, and it is, that they are not only profane but blasphemous. So they ought to be treated and so children ought to be taught. But even setting aside the profaneness and blasphemy of treating Jehovah in this manner, such a method of laboring to carry a point sets a wretched example. It encourages the practice of throwing out every kind of slanderous insinuation against the absent, which the most malignant backbiter can devise. It is recorded on the page of history, that the New Haven Professors took much pains to point out the horrible consequences of believing that God could prevent sin in a moral universe; and after a while, they jointly declared, that they never had *affirmed* this inability in him! As though they must be excused, because they did not affirm! Then I may be excused for sending my insinuations against the Professors through the country, by supposing they are incompetent to hold their stations; and that they are every way a company of unworthy men. I can labor this point with all my might, till they call me to an account; and then I can have the boldness to tell them that I *never affirmed* that they were incompetent and unworthy. Now according to their own example in their treatment of Jehovah, they must be satisfied with me. Thus the malicious defamer may go on with his doubtful insinuations and produce unspeakable mischief in society, and congratulate himself all the while, that he has affirmed nothing bad about any one. How long could society exist, if such conduct were to be tolerated? And we must not forget, that *God* is thus treated in this age of the mind's rapid march!

## LETTER VIII.

PROVERBS, 19; 21.—“THERE ARE MANY DEVICES IN A MAN’S HEART; NEVERTHELESS THE COUNSEL OF THE LORD, THAT SHALL STAND.”

THE theological Professors at Yale College, in their statement, which was published in 1835, say that their only object in instituting the supposition that God may not have been able to prevent sin, was to set aside the doctrine, that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good ; which doctrine, they say, “ we consider as going directly to impeach God’s sincerity as a lawgiver, and to weaken the motive to obedience among his subjects. Beyond this, we are entirely ready to say as to the permission of sin : Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight.”

In a letter from Dr. Goodrich, dated November 30th, 1848, while noticing the same topic, he says : “ The object of our theory did not require us to assert anything more than a *possible* truth. Our design was not, like that of Hopkins, to offer any positive solution *to account* for the existence of evil, by the supposition of anything as *known* and *certain*. We aimed merely to open a way to escape from this theory, for those who felt there was no *possible* reason but the one he had assigned, why a benevolent God should admit sin into our system. All we had to do, therefore, was to point out another reason, as possible.”

There are very strong objections to what Dr. Goodrich here states as the plan which he and his colleagues pursued. If they believed that Dr. Hopkins’ theory was not true, why did they not attack it directly and establish one of their own ? The very fact that they would not do so, looks as though they dared not to attempt to gainsay Hopkins. This is no way to come at truth ; and such a proceeding is an implicit acknowledgment of the weakness of their own cause. It seems they felt themselves *shut up by* Hopkins ; and the most they expected was to *crawl out through the hole of a supposition*. In so doing, they established nothing ; nor did they offer a single argument against Hopkins. Such a procedure is the more strange, from what we shall soon more particularly notice, that the word of God is found, as Dr. Goodrich says, to be against Hopkins’ theory. He however attempts to illustrate the correctness of this course, by what we may say to a convicted sinner, who is sinking into despair by virtue of Hopkins’ theory. In order to relieve his mind, we may show him that his despair proceeds



from "*a groundless assumption.*" And why not take a more simple and sure course, by telling him that the scriptures do not prove him to be deserted of God? Nothing can be more futile than to leave the Bible for suppositions, in order to help a despairing sinner. It is an attempt to be wise above what is written. It is a reflection upon both the word and the providence of God; as though he suffers cases to occur, for which he has made no provision, and for which great WE must provide by our own wisdom. I hesitate not to say that such a course is totally opposed to the Protestant doctrines of the sufficiency of the sacred scriptures. I have uniformly believed that argument should be met by argument, reasoning by reasoning, theory by theory. Though in this quotation by Dr. Goodrich, he calls the scheme he advocates, "theory," yet the general current of his writings and those of his colleagues makes this theory a mere supposition, a "may be," a "bare possibility," a "who can tell but that," a "you cannot prove the contrary," &c. It professes to build nothing; it is simply a demolisher. In the hands of its supporters, however, it seems to be constituted a kind of dray-cart, to carry off the rubbish, which Hopkins' scheme spread over the Bible.

Though I am not a believer in the doctrine, that "sin is the necessary means of the greatest good," yet I respect Dr. Hopkins, for he was frank to declare his principles. Whether he is correct or not, he is not afraid to own what he believes, and to advocate it. How he must have felt had he known before he died, that less than half a century afterwards, his scheme would be thought a very bad one, and yet in the opinion of its most learned opposers, it could not be reached by fair argument, but must be undermined by a non-committal supposition!

But we will hear what Dr. Goodrich has to say further. "This simple *may be*—this bare possibility, has been the means of leading thousands to abandon the supposition which had created their despair. From that moment, they could read the word of God, without feeling the necessity of turning aside its declarations from their plain and obvious import. They were relieved; and that without any *positive* theory to account for the delay of their conversion. Such is the case before us. Many distinguished divines, like Dr. Beecher, Dr. Porter, Dr. Hawes, Dr. Skinner of New York, &c., who had felt themselves shut up by the necessity of the case to the adoption of the old theory, have been led by the suggestions of Dr. Taylor, to reconsider this subject. They saw, on reflection, that another supposition is possible; and seeing this, they have taken up the scriptural argument anew, unshackled by the necessity of reading the word of God (as before) in accordance with what they considered the only admissible suppositions. They now see clearly, that the whole tenor of the word of God is



against the theory of Hopkins—that the distinctions invented to support it are unfounded in truth.” On this passage I remark,

1. I think Dr Goodrich confounds supposition and theory, in a manner embarrassing to the reader. Dr. Hopkins’ scheme is *not* a bare supposition, in the sense in which the scheme of Dr. Goodrich is. Dr. Hopkins’ scheme is positive—he endeavored to *build* something and to abide by it. The scheme of the New Haven Professors, according to Dr. Goodrich, builds nothing and is *designed* to build nothing. Why then put the two schemes into the same class? This evidently does Hopkins’ scheme an injury, though such may not be its design.

2. The quotation, on which I am remarking, evidently shows, if I can understand it, that Dr. Goodrich considers the adoption of some theory or supposition essential, as the basis of interpreting the scriptures. He speaks of Dr. Beecher and the others named, “who had felt themselves shut up by the necessity of the case, to the adoption of the old theory,” by which I conclude he means Hopkins’. How these gentlemen were *shut up* till relieved by Dr. Taylor’s barely possible supposition. Is it so, that these gentlemen did not see that the whole tenor of the word of God was against Hopkins’ scheme, till Dr. Taylor’s possible supposition enlightened them? Is the Christian world dependent upon the suppositions of men to know how to explain the Bible? The whole tenor of the word of God against Hopkins’ scheme, and yet the Doctors in divinity unable to find it out, till they meet with a possible supposition, which, it seems, must be made the key to unlock the scriptures? If “distinguished divines” must institute a barely possible supposition, to ascertain what is the whole tenor of the word of God, what will become of the millions on millions, who have not been thus highly favored, but who have depended upon the Bible to interpret itself, *without foreign aid*? I have really thought, the doctrine of Protestantism demands that we find out the scriptures *by* the scriptures—“comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” But we will hear more from Dr. Goodrich.

“If you ask on what theory do they and we now rest, I answer on *none* as affording any positive solution of the great problem in question. Some may think there are *probabilities* in the case, but nothing more. All are content to say, ‘Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight.’” Indeed—this is the very point to which all the truly reconciled to God come; and they can come as well without a supposition as with it. Yes, and far better! The notion that we must take out of the way the doctrine, that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good, or any other doctrine, before we can say with Christ, “Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight,” does, in my opinion, make a condition

as to the terms of submitting to his will ; and therefore I consider all the speculations which require, or even suggest, such terms of submission, positively dangerous. It seems that some of our great men do not know the way to submission to the divine will without a pioneer, and this must be something entirely foreign to the scriptures ; something which Dr. Taylor has taught them. *It is a possible supposition.* This and this alone prepares them to say, “ Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight.” This wonderful discovery lays the foundation for *caste*. Multitudes of Christians have not had, and multitudes never will have, the privilege of understanding submission to God by this hypothetical route. *They* must make no condition in their submission. It must be entire, however difficult and mysterious many things may seem to them. Doubtless they, as well as the learned gentlemen referred to, have had their difficulties respecting the origin of sin,—why a holy and benevolent God should permit it. But *they* must live and die without any further light than the word of God imparts. But it seems that the gentlemen whom Dr. Goodrich has referred to, are a privileged order. *They* need not a submission so entire. *They* can make a condition with the Almighty. *They* can suppose that he would have prevented all sin, if he could possibly have done it, and yet have a moral system. To gratify his benevolence, he must have a moral system. And now since he *has* a moral system, and has done all he can to prevent sin, but cannot succeed, these learned gentlemen can say with regard to the existence of sin, “ Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight !” If this is not making terms of capitulation to the Almighty, I know not what is ; and it appears to me to be contrary to the letter and spirit of the bible, and consequently to the best religious instructions in revivals of religion. Who, that carefully reads his bible, does not perceive that it requires absolute submission to the divine will, without our proposing terms, or something to *rest upon*, aside from, or above, the control of God ? It seems that the Lord Jesus Christ had no such resting place aside from the mere choice of God, without any fatality beyond his control. Mark, 14 ; 36.—“ And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee ; take this cup from me : nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt.” Here the Saviour must submit, without admitting the possible supposition, that his Father was so restricted, as that he could not remove the cup, had he been disposed. “ Abba, Father, all things are possible with thee.” In this most extraordinary case, the Saviour makes no conditions in his submission—he rests all upon the divine will—he leaves all there. This example of Christ is alone sufficient to put to everlasting silence the clamor of man’s wisdom on this point. With this perfect example of unconditional submission to God, how dare any

interpose a supposition to take away the force of the doctrine of submission, and refuse to rest on the will of God, irrespective of something out of himself, which obliges him to will as he does ?

It is of vast importance, that we look at the cause of the controversy which is perpetually going on between God and his enemies. The great difficulty with them as appears by the convicted sinner is, they will not surrender themselves unconditionally to God. They will readily give up many things, but not every thing. They are ready to make some sacrifice, but at the same time wish to keep something back. Says the Saviour, Luke 14; 33,—“ Whosoever he be of you *that forsaketh not all that he hath*, he cannot be my disciple.” Among other things we must forsake for Christ, one is, *our own wisdom*, whenever it comes in contact with the bible. Hence it appears to me, that that pretended submission to God in relation to the existence of sin, which must be on the supposition that he could not prevent it, is in truth *no submission*. It gives countenance to a conditional submission in relation to any other point, where we may wish to propose terms with our Maker. It is a spurious submission, which a million might have, and every one lose his soul. Here I apprehend is one of the most exceptionable and dangerous points in modern speculations on theology. It contains the germ of a spurious reconciliation to God ; of course, of spurious revivals of religion, and of a spurious religion itself. It allows the sinner to keep back the very thing, which of all others he ought to give up, that is, *the hardest thing to yield*. On the strength of such submission, a certain church member, as I have seen in print, concluded he would not be a Universalist. Ah ! Universalists will become orthodox, and infidels and skeptics will become believers on their own terms,—on men’s terms. But it is quite a different thing to come to God’s terms. This makes true religion, and nothing else will.

Alas ! Are those Christians in this country, who desire that their “ faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God,” aware, that there has been a formidable confederacy to barter the only true submission to God, for a hypothetical, and of course a conditional submission, which, according to Dr. Goodrich, was introduced by Dr. Taylor ? “ Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon ; lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.”

We of the Old School want none of Dr. Taylor’s recipes for submitting to God, because sin exists, however highly they may be recommended by “ many distinguished divines, like Dr. Beecher, Dr. Porter, Dr. Hawes, Dr. Skinner, of New York, &c.” The bible answers all our purpose—of course we do not wish to join a class which is further

advanced in "theological science," than that book can teach. We have no longing to exchange God's truth for suppositions. For,

1. Who does not know, that the famous "supposition" is wholly unauthorized by the word of God? Consequently we are bound to reject it.

2. This supposition, as it is used by the theological Professors at Yale College, gives a skeptical tinge to religion generally.

3. When this supposition is held by those who subscribe to an orthodox creed, it is an expression of insincerity and deception, whether it be so designed or not.

4. This supposition attacks the divine independence, which is abundantly proved by the scriptures as any other attribute of Jehovah, or as any other truth whatever.

5. If we strip Jehovah of all his godlike venerableness, and put him down on a level with a common neighbor, "the supposition" does not practice toward him the Saviour's rule of reciprocity; "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also unto them." It throws out insinuations against him, which it dares not affirm. This we all abhor when practised toward ourselves.

6. It gives countenance to every infamous backbiter who walks the streets, provided he is careful not to "affirm." In short, *it is fraught with nothing but mischief, and has not, in my opinion, done any thing but mischief, since it commenced its career.* And it never will be capable of doing any thing but mischief, till it is put among the things that *were*.

In my sixth Letter I showed, I believe clearly, that ecclesiastical councils, and civil courts, are wont to make a distinction between a case which has no doubt attached to it, and one that has. Of what amazing consequence is a doubt in a criminal case! Often life or death depends upon it. In all instances of supposed murder, the judge's charge to the jury is, if after all the evidence against the person who is tried for his life, there should be a reasonable doubt in the minds of the jury in his favor, they must not declare him guilty. An appeal is now made to the jurists of New England. Gentlemen, you are no doubt acquainted with the disagreement among ministers reputed orthodox, which has existed for more than twenty years; and perhaps you may have been told that the points of difference are very small, and of course they ought not to produce contention. But is it not proper that those ministers who think otherwise, and who deeply deplore the cause of our troubles, should be heard? There are many ministers of the gospel, and pastors of churches, who entered upon the responsible work with the full conviction, that what is contained in the bible should be the whole basis and limits of Christian theology; that "every thought should be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." They feel themselves bound as



with the solemnity of an oath, to deal in what they believe to be God's positive truth, in opposition to all hypothetical speculations. They believe, that the welfare of Zion in general, and the salvation of their hearers in particular, are deeply concerned in these things. How, then, must they feel, to know that strenuous efforts are made to have it appear, that a supposition, which always implies doubt, may be used on a fundamental doctrine of religion, *without effecting a creed?* They feel distressed at such efforts, when they find so much depends upon a doubt. Is it their duty to sit down quietly, and see their brethren introduce suppositions designed to give form and shape to their theological systems, without any rule but their own fancies, when to adopt them, how to apply them, and how much or how little to depend upon them? Neither can we forget, that in the case of a supposed murder, the judge always requires the doubt, if there be any, to be applied *in favor* of the criminal; but our hypothetical theologians bring their doubt to bear *against the ability* of their Maker, and against a multitude of as plain declarations as can be found in the bible. In our opinion a doubt means something in religion as well as in law.

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## LETTER IX.

JOB, 32; 18.—“THE SPIRIT WITHIN ME CONSTRAINETH ME.”

So many strange things occur in the course of a man's life, that some think it is best to learn never to be surprised at what takes place. In a communication of the Theological Professors at New Haven to the Trustees of the Theological Institute of Connecticut, in the year 1835, we have this sentence: “We have never affirmed that God *could* not exclude sin from a moral universe.” The scheme, that God may not have been able to prevent sin was publicly announced by Dr. Taylor in his “*Conscio ad clerum*,” in the year 1828. Now admitting, that the Professors through all they wrote to vindicate their peculiar views, during seven years, did not *affirm* that God could not have prevented sin, I am unable to perceive the propriety of this caution. They certainly labored much to convince all their readers that God *could not* prevent sin. Admitting they were sincere in what they wrote, it is a wonder indeed, that they *never affirmed*, and that they did not *most strenuously affirm*, that God is unable to prevent sin. It seems to me it would be their glory to



affirm it, if they felt as their writings indicate ; and that a refusal to affirm it would be the last thing in their hearts. In the *Christian Spectator* for 1832, page 567, they say, "But in our view, it is a question, whether it is not essential to the honor of God, to suppose that he has done all he could to secure the universal holiness of his accountable creatures, and that nevertheless, some, in defiance of it all, would rebel." Now if they seriously apprehend that it is essential to the honor of God to believe he is unable to prevent sin in a moral universe, how *can* they content themselves to remain in a state of uncertainty ? It must be distressing to a conscientious mind to be in doubt on a subject of so great importance, even for a day. If a man fears that any part of his creed is dishonorable to God, he ought to give it up till further light ; for he cannot be made to believe that God is dishonored both ways. Indeed, one might think, that what is contained in the above quotation is sufficient to indicate the belief of those who wrote it, or approved it in others. What need of a supposition on the point ?

We will now notice another sentence on this subject. "But show us a God, who, able to advance the holiness of a universe forever, and to protect it from all the inroads of sin, does nevertheless, in the choice of his heart respecting a *whole universe*, actually reject such protection, and prefer to gratify his subjects with a mere exhibition at the expense of the sin and misery of one or many of his subjects ; and we shall see him purposely leading off the holy into sin, and preferring their rebellion to obedience in every instance it occurs ; and in all his conduct towards sinners from first to last, we shall never see any wisdom, any goodness, any holiness, any justice, any mercy, but the mere caprice that starts aside from all, simply to make an exhibition which throws eternal horror into all our hearts !" — *Ch. Spec.* 1832, p. 644. And yet the Professors *would never affirm* but such is the very God of the universe ! Such effusions are enough to make one's blood curdle in his veins ! They will not affirm but our God so conducts "towards sinners from first to last," that "we shall never see any wisdom, any goodness, any holiness, any justice, any mercy," in him ! Let the impenitent sinner fairly get hold of the Professor's skepticism, and he would deem it ridiculous to hear them exhort him to believe, and love, and obey such a God ; to choose a God for our everlasting portion, in whom we have serious doubts whether we can "see any wisdom, any goodness, any holiness, any justice, any mercy !"

I will now introduce the reader to a sentiment of the Professors, so absurd, that common absurdities dwindle into insignificance. "It is admitted, that what men have done to impair the blessedness of God by sin, has not failed of its results in the actual diminution of his blessed-

ness, compared with what it had been, had they obeyed his perfect law.” *Spirit of the Pilgrims*, vol. 5. p. 693.

The first thing which strikes the mind on reading these words, is, the mutability of Jehovah. If I had not understood that the writer of the foregoing sentence was a Doctor of Divinity, I should doubt whether he understood the proper use of terms. According to what he says, God was once happier than he is now. With him, then, there *is* variability, and not only a shadow of turning, but a *real turning* ! Also this sentiment is against the fore-knowledge of God, or his wisdom. Did not God know before he created man, that he would sin ? If he did not, he must have been wofully disappointed. But if he did know beforehand, that man would break his holy law, if created, and that such conduct would diminish his blessedness, how does his wisdom appear ? This question appears peculiarly forcible, if we consider the following doctrine of the Professors. “ Of all specific voluntary action, the happiness of the agent in some form is the ultimate end.” No one can doubt, that it was specific voluntary action in God to create man. Now if he knew all things, he must know that man would sin if created ; and of course, according to the Professors, God, though a moral agent, could not make his own happiness the ultimate object, for it seems to have been greatly diminished by man’s sins. What consistency ! If this does not suit, let the Professors or their advocates take the other alternative. Let them say if they please, that God *did* know that men would sin, if created ; but he would create them, and has become a perpetual sufferer for so doing. Yes ; and if sin has diminished his blessedness, the amazing degree of it committed in the universe, must make God infinitely wretched ! Thus the scheme makes him very ignorant, or very unwise, or probably both. This is plain truth ; and I think it is important to dwell upon it, and hold it up, that an injured community may see the length and the breadth of some of those schemes that tickle the careless and superficial, that unsettle the mind in relation to divine truth, and prepare it for the nameless absurdities of error and skepticism. It is proper, that such speculations should be held up, till curiosity shall be satisfied with this *world of wonders*, this matchless nonsense.

## L E T T E R X .

## THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

JOB, 36 ; 2.—“SUFFER ME A LITTLE, AND I WILL SHOW THEE THAT I HAVE YET TO SPEAK ON GOD’S BEHALF.”

THE reader will notice, that in the first two quotations from the Professors in my last letter, the form of a supposition is kept up by them, though as it seems to me, at the expense of Jehovah’s character. In the last quotation, the form of a supposition is dropped, though the sentiments seem to stand wholly on the strength of a supposition. To be consistent, therefore, the Professors ought to have said, “It is admitted, [as a barely possible supposition, and what we never affirm to be true,] that what men have done to impair the blessedness of God by sin, has not failed of its results in the actual diminution of his blessedness, compared with what it had been, had they obeyed his perfect law.”

We come now to the leading deception of the Professors’ speculations—they make their premises hypothetical, and their conclusions positive. They begin by saying it may possibly be so ; and then seem to forget themselves, and make the most unqualified assertions to be the result of what they would have us believe they barely suppose. The last quotation is one instance among others we shall yet notice. Here the writer is so positive that Jehovah could not prevent sin in a moral universe, that without the least qualification, he makes assertions, which rudely meddle with God’s immutability, with his prescience and wisdom. He seems to have turned his great hypothesis into a positive theory, as though it were entirely settled in his mind, that sin has produced a disastrous change in God—that he is not that blessed being now, and of course never will be, that he was before sin entered the world. And yet the writer and all his associates are prompt in approving and recommending the Westminster Catechism, and will take it amiss to be thought behind their brethren in lauding that work. Yea, they will talk as strong in favor of old Puritan Orthodoxy, as though they never did anything in their lives but establish it.

The reader must now prepare to soar far above the “eagle’s flight,” and outstrip transcendentalism itself. “The case is so plain—it is so easy to imagine a better world or a better universe than the present,

that the mind can never rest in the assurance that its author is benevolent, without supposing that he is restricted in the production of happiness, by some impossibility involving a contradiction. Here we must rest, or deny the benevolence of an infinite creator."

What a mind this writer must have had to comprehend Jehovah and his works at a glance, and so readily decide, beyond all doubt, that he must be wanting either in benevolence or ability, inasmuch as he has not made a better world and a better universe! "The case is so plain;" yet he dares not affirm, that God is unable to exclude sin from a moral universe—he dares not affirm God's inability. He must then deny his benevolence—"The case is so plain." Reader: fancy to yourself the writer of such speculations teaching his children the Westminster Catechism. He asks: What is God? The child answers: "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth." Consider farther, that after the child has finished his lesson, and been exhorted never to forget such just views of God, he should take up the *Christian Spectator* for 1832, and open to page 570, and read thus: "The case is so plain—it is so easy to imagine a better world, or a better universe than the present, that the mind can never rest in the assurance that its author is benevolent, without supposing that he is restricted in the production of happiness, by some impossibility involving a contradiction. Here we must rest, or deny the benevolence of an infinite Creator."

If children, who are taught such extravagant and wild incoherences, are neither dunces nor atheists, it cannot be owing to their instructions. The man, who is capable of writing or relishing such views of God, ought to take advice from Pope:

"Go, teach eternal wisdom how to rule:  
Then drop into thyself, and be a fool."

Whoever the writer may be; however learned and wise he may be in the estimation of his fellow men, he will go down to his grave unable to answer questions concerning the least atom that floats in the sunbeams. Yet he feels competent to decide concerning the ways of the "infinite Creator," "who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." He seems "to know all about God," as a youth once said, after he had been to "the world of wonders."

The writer of these strictures has known by experience, what a Puritanic education is, however poorly he may have profited by it. At home he was taught the Westminster Catechism. At the house of God, he heard a teacher of the Bible, (not philosophy,) and he is confident

that such Puritanism has tendencies exactly the reverse of the essence of New Haven divinity. In his religious training, the greatest care was used to make Jehovah appear venerable. Hence the modern speculations, such as we are noticing, will be revolting and shocking, so long as the last trace of his education shall linger in his memory. Neither can he take the least satisfaction in the attempts, which, he finds, are making, to connect New Divinity with the Puritan doctrine concerning God. What resemblance is there? None. I must think, that if such miserable, degrading views of the great King of heaven had first issued from an infidel convention, they would be considered in keeping with mockers; and I can conceive of nothing but a human authority which awes so many into silence, that prevents the pious all over the country from coming out and boldly vindicating the scriptural character of God. I did think till within twenty years, that there was more independence among the ministers of New England. I would not make this suggestion, if I knew how it could honestly be avoided. If the true character of God is not worth standing up boldly for, what is? And if the paragraph under review, so unlike the Puritanic doctrine of Jehovah, is indeed the Bible truth on this fundamental point of all religion let its advocates come forward and plead for it. But let not those who really believe in the God our fathers worshiped, be awed into silence. If there is a professed teacher of our holy religion, who sees no essential difference between the God described in the Westminster Catechism, and the one described by the paragraph recently quoted, I think it would be well for religion, if he should seek some other profession.

NOTE.—Dr. Goodrich informs me, that he was not the writer of that paragraph, as I had thought; but he says not a word against the sentiments contained in it. Accordingly, we have a right to believe he adopts them.



## LETTER XI.

## THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

JOB, 27; 5.—“GOD FORBID THAT I SHOULD JUSTIFY YOU.”

WE have already considered in part how much the Theological Professors at New Haven depend upon a supposition, to make out a system of theology, which after all they dare not affirm to be anything more than a possible supposition—that on the strength of it, they reason and form positive conclusions, as though it must be true—that such a procedure carries along with it a positive deception, and therefore cannot be justified, by whomsoever it may be practiced. I now introduce an extraordinary paragraph of this description. The reader will bear in mind, that the writer of said paragraph is careful to say he never affirms that God is unable to prevent sin in a moral universe. Yet he declares, that “this theory, if carried out into its legitimate consequences, leads to UNIVERSALISM, to INFIDELITY, and to ATHEISM. Dr. Tyler maintains that God CAN SECURE THE HOLINESS AND HAPPINESS OF ALL HIS MORAL CREATURES.” This last sentence seems to contain astonishment in the writer, that Dr. Tyler should dare believe what the real believers in the Westminster Catechism never denied—that God could have prevented sin.

But continues our author: “It follows, therefore, that God will secure the holiness and happiness of all his moral creatures. Of course, all men will be saved.” [Ah, the writer dares not affirm that it will not be so!] “But this is not all. According to this scheme, the divine authority of the Bible is subverted. This book confessedly abounds in the most unqualified declarations of the future endless misery of multitudes of the human race. As an omnipotent being HE CAN, according to Dr. Tyler, PREVENT SUCH A RESULT. As a benevolent being, he must be disposed to prevent it. But according to Dr. Tyler, the scriptures clearly teach that God will not secure the perfect holiness of his moral creation, WHEN HE CAN SECURE IT. How then can a book, which belies every essential attribute of a perfect God, pretend to claim his authority?”

Reader, the author of what I am quoting is the Rev. Nathaniel Taylor, D. D., of New Haven, and he was one of the four Professors,

who declared to the public over their own signatures, in the year 1835, that they *never affirmed* that God is unable to prevent sin in a moral universe. Now the whole question between Dr. Taylor and Dr. Tyler in these quotations related to the single point, whether God is, or is not, able to prevent sin in a moral universe. Dr. Tyler took the common and only Calvinistic ground, that God *is* able; and in so doing Dr. Taylor heaps the most horrible consequences upon his belief; and yet Dr. Taylor will not affirm that God is unable to prevent sin; and he of course will not affirm that his own scheme is not attended with all the revolting objections he charges upon Dr. Tyler's! He will not affirm that his own scheme does not lead to Universalism, to Infidelity, and to Atheism. He is asked the same question which he asked Dr. Tyler: "How then can a book which belies every essential attribute of a perfect God, pretend to claim his authority?"

But duty requires that the extraordinary fruits of Dr. Taylor's pen should be further noticed. He says: "Apply now the principles of Dr. Tyler in another form, and Atheism is the consequence. Dr. Tyler maintains, that GOD CAN PREVENT ALL EVIL THROUGHOUT HIS CREATION. The argument, then, for Atheism, furnished by this theory, may be thus stated. If there were a God, that is, a being of infinite power and goodness, he could prevent, and would be disposed, and therefore would in fact, prevent all evil throughout his creation. But evil exists. Therefore, there is not a being of infinite power and goodness—there is no God. We admit the fact that the foregoing reasoning is that of the Universalist, the Infidel and the Atheist. But we ask, who furnishes and sustains the premises; and what conclusions, when the premises are admitted, are more UNANSWERABLE?" Dr. Taylor is told, that according to his own principles, *he* furnishes and sustains the premises, so far as he is in doubt, as he evidently is, whether God is able to prevent sin. As he says he never has affirmed that God is unable to prevent sin, he certainly shows us, that he does not know but it is true, that God *is able*, after all to prevent it; and therefore he will not positively deny a "theory," which he says "leads to Universalism, to Infidelity and to Atheism." It is proper, therefore, that Dr. Taylor should understand, that unless he takes back what is here quoted from his writings, he must be considered unsettled in his belief in any religion. On what ground are any authorized to *affirm* that he believes in any religion whatever?

Dr. Taylor goes on: "We cannot but say what we believe in the integrity of our heart, that supralapsarian Calvinists furnish the grand principle on which these conclusions rest; and combining their powers of argument in its defence, with all their means of influencing the

faith of others, give to it, and to the conclusions founded on it, a delusive and fearful infallibility in the minds of thousands." Now Dr. Taylor will not say but he is himself a supralapsarian Calvinist—one who helps furnish the grand principle on which these conclusions rest, and who gives to it, and to the conclusions founded on it, a delusive and fearful infallibility, in the minds of the thousands, whom as a professed preacher of the gospel and teacher of theology he is endeavoring to influence. If a person, so undecided on these points, is a safe guide for our pious youth, who are soon to become the ministers of Jesus Christ, and to carry his gospel over the world, then I frankly acknowledge, that I can discern no important difference between faith and skepticism—between Calvinism and Atheism. A teacher of theology unsettled on these points! Look at it. But Dr. Taylor proceeds: "The principle is, that AN OMNIPOTENT GOD, BY THE MERE DINT OF POWER, CAN SECURE THE UNIVERSAL HOLINESS AND HAPPINESS OF HIS MORAL CREATURES." And what but the dint of power *will* secure the universal holiness and happiness of God's moral creatures? 2 Peter, 1; 3.—"According as his *divine power* hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness." O philosophy, how dost thou appear beside the word of God! Dr. Taylor adds: "We cannot but say, that in our honest belief, the advocates of this principle greatly, but inconsiderately, contribute to the most DESTRUCTIVE ERRORS." Indeed! And are those innocent who will not "affirm" that this "principle" is erroneous? Is there no fearful responsibility resting upon those, who condemn others for contributing "to the most destructive errors," but will not affirm that their belief is any better—who will not affirm that they are not contributing "to the most destructive errors?"

The last sentence I shall quote from an article which is a moral curiosity, is this: "Sure we are, that a very limited acquaintance with facts would show, that the principle advocated by Dr. Tyler and others is the very same, which in the hands of Voltaire and other enemies of the gospel has spread Infidelity and Atheism to such a fearful extent throughout Europe, and is in fact the basis of all that latitudinarianism which rejects Christianity and calmly reposes on false and undefined notions of the goodness and power of God." *Christian Spectator for September, 1832*, pp. 481—483. This I take to be Dr. Taylor's master-piece. He never will be able to bring a higher charge against Dr. Tyler and others, including all the real Calvinists in Christendom, the Edwardses, Hopkins, Bellamy, Strong, Smalley, Dwight, Emmons, Payson, &c., &c., &c. It seems that men of this stamp have been the supple tools of such men as Voltaire and the host of Atheists, whose

infernal doings introduced the French Revolution, with all its abominations and horrors ! How venerable must the writer of the foregoing paragraph appear in raking up the ashes of the multitudes of our Puritan ancestors, and in passing a sentence of accusation against them. Among these accusations is that "latitudinarianism, which rejects Christianity, and calmly reposes on false and undefined notions of the goodness and power of God." Does Dr. Taylor think he can make all believe, that there ever was a scheme, which has so undefined notions of the goodness and power of God, as that which he has presented for the consideration of the public ? A scheme which ranges from a barely possible supposition to the most important belief on a subject—a belief so essential, that if you do not adopt it, you are in the danger of becoming a Universalist, an Infidel, an Atheist ? A scheme, in the mazes of which, one may so conceal himself as to defy all knowledge short of the perfect knowledge of the hearts of others, to ascertain what a man means by what he says. This scheme is so accommodating, that in conformity to it, we may make an assertion, and mean nothing but a possible supposition, or, what we positively believe, according to circumstances. If we find ourselves in danger of being entrapped, we can mean nothing but a supposition, which is not to be regarded as serious belief. But if we have so much self-confidence, as to believe that we can argue down, or frighten down, or laugh down, or trifle down an opponent, we can then swell the supposition into the most essential truth, and exhaust all our eloquence (be it more or less) to point out the abominable, shocking, dreadful, horrible, thrice horrible consequences of doubting it. I am drawing no fancy picture. Let any candid man read the writings of the Professors on the subject and tell me if my description comes up to the reality.

Not long after the article from which the last extracts are taken, was published, rumor said, that a competent gentleman told the author of the article, that if he and his associates would not put a stop to their speculations, they would ruin the college. There is sufficient internal evidence of the high probability, at least, that this story is true ; for, in the first place, it shows us how to account for another article from the pen of Dr. Taylor, in which he pretends to have made the discovery that he and Dr. Tyler were perfectly agreed. Yes ; after attempting to horrify the public mind with the most dangerous doctrines of Dr. Tyler, who by the way, had given to the public a fair specimen of New England Orthodoxy ; after exhausting all his skill to revolutionize the scriptural theology of our fathers, by a non-committal supposition, without the anticipated success, and with no small danger of his reputation, he proclaims to the world that this heretical Dr. Tyler and himself are per-



fectly agreed ! It must have been no small occasion, which could force such a man as Dr. Taylor to take this position. *Without* such a rumor as I have noticed, it would be very natural to conclude that *something* was the matter ; and though the course of Dr. Taylor seems strange enough still, yet to me it would have seemed stranger, if he had declared himself at agreement with Dr. Tyler without *any* definite cause.

But in the next place, it would have been very extraordinary if no one had approached the Professors in the manner already stated, and frankly rebuked them for the pernicious course they were pursuing. And it is lamentable that more had not dealt faithfully with them. I could not have believed without the aid of stubborn facts, that so many able, discriminating ministers in this state and elsewhere, would have remained silent, and shown a disposition to stand aloof in a case of duty so plain. Is not every minister of the gospel bound by his public consecration to his holy work, to act with independence ? Is he not bound to set his face against all skeptical indifference to fundamental truths ? Is he not bound to acquire a sufficient knowledge of the word of God to detect philosophy and vain deceit, in whomsoever it may be found, and however ingeniously it may be interspersed and interwoven with truth ? It is taken for granted by the great mass of people, that he is capable of teaching them in all the great truths of divine revelation, and of vindicating them against the arts of sophistry, and the subtleties of the cunning. It is taken for granted, that he has independence enough to think for himself, and boldness enough to declare what he thinks, and conscience enough to fear to withhold what he believes. It wounds the feelings of humble confiding Christians, to be under the necessity of suspecting, that their ministers, whose authority they believe ought to be as high as any other human authority, are the mere proselytes to some erratic Rabbi. They want to have their religious teachers, Bible men rather than philosophers. They desire to have them bring their knowledge from the pure fountain of divine truth, rather than from that wisdom of the world which is foolishness with God.

If the Professors were indeed told, that to continue their speculations would ruin the college, it is just such language as might be expected to come from the lips of a discerning, judicious man. As dear as is the venerable Yale to the sons of New England, she cannot withstand many more shocks, such as she has already received, without being given up to irrecoverable degradation, by at least one part of the religious community.

About the time that New Divinity was in the full tide of experiment, Dr. Fisk, President of the Methodist University of Middletown, Conn., a professed Arminian, published a sermon against the Calvinistic view of



the Divine decrees. It seemed suitable that Dr. Fitch, a Professor of Divinity in old Calvinistic Yale, should reply to this sermon. He attempted it; but to the deep regret and mortification of many of his ministerial brethren, and to the astonishment of President Fisk, he came out on the Arminian side. So clear was it in the mind of President Fisk that Professor Fitch was essentially with him, that he reproved him for keeping himself so much in disguise. He said, "if it is safer to attack Calvinism in this indirect way, I will not object. But I cannot see that it would be safer. An open bold front always ends best. As I understand the reviewer, (Dr. Fitch,) from the days of John Calvin down to the present hour, there is on this point, ('predestinate—fore-ordain—decree,') between the great body of Calvinists and himself, almost no likeness except in the use of words. Theirs is one doctrine, his another. Why then does he hail from that party and hoist their signals; and then, after seeming to get the victory by espousing the very cause of the assailed, encourage the Calvinists to triumph, as if their cause had been successful?" (See *Dr. Griffin on Divine Efficiency*, pp. 28, 29.)

Professor Fitch has held the Divinity chair in the academical department, ever since the above named correspondence with President Fisk; and has all the while been moulding the minds of the numerous students, as their pastor. Our excellent young men come to this college, annually, from all parts of the country, and return in due time, carrying the seeds of what President Fisk thought was Arminianism. Having received their first lessons at college, many of those young men, who turn their attention to the ministry, enter the theological department, and are initiated into all the peculiarities of Dr. Taylor's philosophy of religion; in other words, into a hypothetical Theology, which he teaches in fellowship with Professor Fitch.

Has not Dr. Fitch, as the Professor of Divinity in this venerable institution, manifestly betrayed it? I think I cannot mistake in saying, that Yale College was set up by our Puritan ancestors, who were *real* Calvinists, and who of course designed, that its theology should be *real Calvinism*. The college came into existence but a few years before the Saybrook Confession was written, which was adopted as the sincere belief of the ministers and churches of Connecticut. The sentiments, therefore, of the founders of the college have ever been well known; and the same can be said of those who have managed its interests, till the death of Dr. Dwight, who was Professor of Divinity, as well as President. Dr. Fitch succeeded him in the department of theology, and in my opinion, has done as much as any man could do in this very favorable situation to revolutionize the college. And if the sentiments of the Professor of Divinity in a college are an index of its religious belief, then Yale Col-

lege is as completely revolutionized as ever Cambridge College was. I do not say, that it has become Unitarian like Cambridge ; but it has become something different from that Calvinism which was the glory of its founders.

Connecticut has been long and extensively famed as a land of the Puritans, and *the* land of steady habits ; and no fourth of July, or annual Thanksgiving passes, and probably no Sabbath, without some public expression of gratification, that we can take the places of such worthy people as first organized and composed our churches, established our ecclesiastical polity, and gave us such a summary of doctrine from the scriptures for the Confession of Faith. How ready every thing has been made to our hands by these worthy fathers, who were so firmly established in the faith ! Who, then, can account for this tameness under the theological change in Yale College ? To one, who had heard much of old Connecticut, before his "feet ever pressed its soil," and who has seen and enjoyed much in it since, such acquiescence is totally unaccountable. Does it fairly represent the spirit of those who were said to be so jealous for God's truth, and so engaged to make it known, at the commencement of the last century ? Their sentiments gave a name to the college. It was known as a Calvinistic Institution by both friends and foes, without a dissenting voice, from the time it was organized, till its present Divinity Professor came into office. But what is it now ? One says its theology is Pelagian ; and another that it is Arminian ; and many do not pretend to know what it is. Now does not every one believe, that there was no ground for mere conjecture or ignorance on this subject, in the days of the fathers ? They were called Calvinists, because they believed, and taught, and established, a Confession for Yale College, according to the real, obvious import of such passages of scripture as the following : "I the Lord, the first and the last ; I am he." "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending," "the first and the last." "The Lord hath made all things for himself." "For thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." "I form the light, and create darkness ; I make peace and create evil ; I the Lord do all these things." "But our God is in the heavens ; he hath done whatsoever he pleased." "And he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth ; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou ?" "The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations." "According to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

We will now turn our attention to the teachings of the successor of

Dr. Dwight in the divinity chair in Yale College. He says, "Human rebellion and wickedness oppose themselves to a work of grace in our world, and hindrances to salvation, *which the God of grace cannot wholly overcome.*" (See *Dr. Griffin on Divine Efficiency*, p. 18.) Much more might be quoted from the writings of Dr. Fitch, to show the inability of God in relation to what he would do if he could. But this is enough. It teaches a doctrine which is radically opposed to that Calvinism, to which the founders of Yale College adhered in life and in death. Now, if Dr. Fitch, or any one who reads these pages, can find a passage of scripture, between the first verse in Genesis, and the last in Revelations, which teaches the doctrine of Jehovah's inability, as Dr. Fitch teaches it,

"And I consent you take it for your text,  
Your only one till sides and benches fail."

We are here taught in plain language that God is *not* able to prevent sin. *The God of grace cannot wholly overcome human rebellion and wickedness.* How this doctrine looks beside those passages in the scriptures which have just been quoted, and a multitude of others, which the common reader of the bible cannot fail in noticing. I feel confident, let who will oppose, that such anti-scriptural boldness ought to be met by equal boldness in defence of God's truth. But there is another expression of boldness, which ought not to be passed over in silence. After Dr. Fitch had published what I have now quoted, with much more of the same import—indeed, after he had written and published much to show Jehovah's inability to prevent sin, he declared over his own signature in conjunction with his colleagues, "We have never affirmed that God *could* not exclude sin from a moral universe." It was no affirmation, then, for Dr. Fitch to say that "Human rebellion and wickedness oppose themselves to a work of grace in our world, and hindrances to salvation which the God of grace *cannot wholly overcome!*" O charity, what dost thou say to these things! Are not such treachery and untruthfulness, if passed over, enough to ruin a college? If the special guardians of that once venerable institution will suffer its dignity and reputation to be thus let down, I cannot help it. But I would not that the orthodoxy of Yale College should evaporate without the public expression of sympathy, which has often been made in behalf of Harvard. When the glory departed from that college, there were many to bemoan its fall. But who is there to take up a lamentation for the sad change which has come upon that noble institution, which has been the boast of Connecticut for ages?

There is an infinite difference between a God, whose counsel stands forever, and who does *all* his pleasure, and a God who finds that human rebellion and wickedness so oppose themselves to a work of grace, that he cannot overcome them. I cannot conceive of a greater absurdity, than for a professed believer in the bible to speak as though he thought there were any incompetency in God to do just as he pleases. Has not Dr. Fitch subscribed to a confession of faith, which declares that God "is infinite in his being, wisdom, *power*, holiness, justice, goodness and truth"? How comes it to pass, then, that he knows so much about infinite, what is unlimited, boundless, as to make infinite goodness superior to infinite power? It seems, according to his view, that God *would* overcome human rebellion and wickedness if he could. Here the doctrine of Jehovah's incompetency is clearly brought to view. My fixed belief is, that if God's attributes are infinite, they are equal: there is perfect harmony between them. Therefore if we are not infinite ourselves, it is consummate folly in us to pretend to decide that any one of Jehovah's infinite attributes is superior to another;—to pretend that his goodness is superior to his power; that he would be glad to do what he cannot, and the like. Such degrading views of our infinite God have no particle of Bible religion in them; and where is the heathen, who would not consider his idol insulted, if treated in such a manner? The boy at sea, who was sportive in a terrible storm was asked, "Are you not afraid?" He replied, "No, for father is at the helm." It was the perfect confidence of the perfect competency of his father, which made him feel safe; and unless he had had this confidence, he would have been in terror. In like manner, the Christian cannot feel safe in a world of so much sin and misery, and where he is assailed with so many temptations and dangers, and with trials of every kind, unless he can have perfect confidence in the perfect competency of his heavenly Father, *who is at the helm*. Wherever there is the least doubt about the perfect gratification of any of Jehovah's desires, there is an unscriptural distrust of his perfect ability to do all his pleasure. Why then is there so much reasoning which requires the modification of the plain express passages of scripture on this subject? It is an essential and established rule of interpreting the bible, *always to adopt the obvious sense of a text, unless other parts of the bible show a plain necessity for departing from this rule*. Let us try the passage in Job 23; 13.—"And what his soul desireth, even that he doeth." Now does the analogy of the scriptures require any departure from the most literal sense of this text? If so, in what books, chapters and verses are those passages found, which demand any modification?

Much is said in this age about modifying texts of scripture, and even



the doctrines of scripture. I know of but two ways in which this can be done. One is by the scriptures themselves. This is the true and only proper way. It is what is required of every one when he reads the bible. It is simply "comparing spiritual things with spiritual." Unless we do thus, we need not expect to gain much knowledge by reading the bible. As we are all fallible and liable to err, we may make mistakes even in *this* course. It becomes us, then, to read and compare prayerfully; and without any preconceived schemes, to which we intend the scriptures must bow. This is the safest course for us; but even then we shall have errors enough. But if we pretend to study the scriptures as learners, and all the while try to make them speak our language, we abuse them, and their Author, and play the hypocrite. This is the *other* way to modify the scriptures; and it is doing it by human authority, by man's wisdom, by the wisdom of the world which comes to naught. It is to set up our wisdom above that of God, and to make ourselves the standard instead of the bible. All schemes which are contrived on this principle, however much learning and time and zeal may have been bestowed upon them: however ingenious they may seem, and however many admirers they may have, shed darkness instead of light upon the word of God, and are therefore far worse than useless. If I did not believe thus, I should lose all my confidence in the bible. And a sense of duty impels me to add, that there is alarming evidence that the speculations of Dr. Fitch and his colleagues, are of this character. If they are indeed founded upon the bible, why did not Dr. Goodrich set me right, when in a letter to him I declared them to be destitute of the least scriptural authority, which letter, or the principal part of it, will be found in the fourteenth letter of this series. Yet these speculations must be essential to the divinity of Yale College.

Let us take another view of that theory which is designed to be the great modifier of God's word. It is the power of contrary choice without any prescribed limits. "Moral agents can do wrong, (and of course can do right,) under all possible preventing influence." Then the saint can fall from grace in spite of all that God can do to prevent it. There is no mistake. Then the impenitent sinner can, with a single leap, become perfectly holy without divine grace. Then all the inhabitants of heaven and hell can change places, and all God's moral creation be an everlasting mass of uncertainty and confusion. But no, says the advocate of New Divinity: "There is a difference between necessity and certainty." His meaning must be this. It is necessary that moral agents should have all this liberty; but it is not certain that they will use it. But I say, on the other hand, it is not certain but they will use it; for it is a new Divinity maxim, that "this possibility that free agents



will sin remains, (suppose what else you will,) so long as moral agency remains, and how can it be proved, that a thing *will not be*, when, for aught that appears, *it may be?*" This quotation is from the *Christian Spectator*, the standard work of New Divinity. Its advocates cannot prove, therefore, but that moral agents will take all the liberty I have suggested. They cannot prove that Christians will not apostatize in this world; and that impenitent sinners will not become holy, not however by the power of the Holy Ghost on their hearts; but that they will become holy by the mere dint of free agency. They cannot prove but that all the inhabitants of heaven will apostatize, and as a New Divinity preacher has been understood to say, "Leave the Almighty without a solitary worshiper!" No, they cannot prove but that after the present inhabitants shall all go off, those happy regions will be re-peopled by those who are now the tenants of the world of woe!

But we have arrived yet only at the threshold of this nameless structure. However revolting it may be, it seems necessary to look a moment in the interior. God is a free moral agent. On this point New Divinity people insist. Of course he must have that essential property of a moral agent, which, we are confidently told is, that one "can do wrong under all possible preventing influence." "This possibility that free agents will sin remains, (suppose what else you will,) so long as free agency remains, and how can it be proved, that a thing *will not be*, when, for aught that appears, *it may be?*"

Here then is a plain intimation, that no one can prove but that God himself will turn a sinner!!!

When I first read Dr. Dwight's description of the present life and of futurity, as he considered Atheism made them, I thought it was the darkest picture of the universe that could be drawn.—(See *vol. 1, sermon 3d, of his Theology.*) But ever since I have learned what the New Haven speculations are, I have felt, that if they are true, *as the case might be*, they make the prospect far darker still. They present us, as far as we can know, with an Almighty sinner, in whose hands we all must forever be, and who, for aught we can tell, will make an eternal hell darker and deeper for the righteous, than justice demands for the wicked!

But it may be said, that the Professors intend no such thing by their scheme. Then let them be more cautious how they outrage all religious feeling, and even put Atheism itself on the back-ground, by their uncalled for speculations. The subject is too serious, too much is involved in it, to be treated in a careless, random manner. I can conceive of nothing short of a positive abandonment of all religion, more calculated to shock a bible-believing community, than such skeptical intimations as New Divinity puts forth, if fully understood.

## LETTER XII.

JOB 6 ; 28.—“ NOW, THEREFORE, BE CONTENT ; LOOK UPON ME ; FOR IT IS EVIDENT UNTO YOU  
IF I LIE.”

I HAVE heard it asserted, by men of sense, who assumed to understand the subject, that after all the Professors had written, it was not inconsistent for them to declare they never affirmed that God is unable to prevent sin in a moral universe. I must say, that it is beyond my comprehension to perceive on what ground such an assertion can be made.

The reader is requested to take another look at the quotation already made in these words : “ But in our view it is a question whether it is not essential to the honor of God, to suppose that he has done all he could to secure the universal holiness of his accountable creatures, and that nevertheless, some, in defiance of it all, would rebel.” Is there no inconsistency between the suggestion in these words, and *not affirming* that God is unable to prevent sin ? Was it consistent for the Professors, in their high, responsible capacity, to leave the honor of God in this doubtful situation ? If the theme was too high for them, why did they not let it alone ? Ps. 131 ; 1.—“ Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty : neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.” Was it consistent for the Professors to sow the seeds of skepticism far and wide, in relation to the honor of God ? To make it doubtful whether God *has* any honor ? Does this skeptical world need such suggestions and efforts ; and are we to look for them in the teachers of our school of the prophets ?

Is there a consistency between the Professors’ refusing to affirm that God is unable to prevent sin, and the following sentence ? “ But show us a God, who, able to advance the holiness of a universe forever, and to protect it from all the inroads of sin, does, nevertheless, in the choice of his heart respecting *a whole universe*, actually reject such protection, and prefer to gratify his subjects with a mere exhibition at the expense of the sin and misery of one or any of his subjects ; and we shall see him purposely leading off the holy into sin, and preferring their rebellion to their obedience in every instance it occurs, and in all this conduct towards sinners, from first to last, we shall never see any wisdom, any

goodness, any holiness, any justice, any mercy, but the mere caprice, that starts aside from all, simply to make an exhibition, which throws eternal horror into all our hearts." This eternal horror, it seems, is thrown into all the hearts of the New Haven school, at the thought that God can prevent sin ; and yet not one of them dare to deny that he is able to prevent it. Is this consistent ? Is there no lack of moral courage ? Would such men go to the stake rather than to doubt whether God has any wisdom, or goodness, or holiness, or justice, or mercy ?

Now it is my opinion, that there is a great inconsistency in men's professing to teach positively that God is a being of infinite wisdom, goodness, holiness, justice and mercy, and at the same time, will not affirm that the only system is true, which they say can make him so.

What then shall we think of the consistency of those, who gravely hold forth, that God has suffered his blessedness to be diminished by the existence of sin, but will not *affirm* that he is unable to prevent it ? Is this consistent ? If you tell me so, then take another case still. Was it consistent for the Professors to assert—"The case is so plain—it is so easy to imagine a better world and a better universe than the present, that the mind can never rest in the assurance that its author is benevolent, without supposing that he is restricted in the production of happiness by some impossibility involving a contradiction ;" and yet be totally unwilling to affirm that God was under any such restriction ? Whoever can discern the consistency of the Professors in these things, must, I think, have a very uncommon mind.

I can but believe, that each of the four quotations, to which reference is now made, when put by the side of the declaration, "We have never affirmed that God *could* not exclude sin in a moral universe," is sufficient by itself to show a gross inconsistency in the writings of the theological Professors at New Haven ; and it appears to me, that it is incumbent on some person who denies this, to show in writing how they are consistent. The community want proof as well as assertions ; and they demand it. They believe it is not honorable for the Professors, or for their associates, to leave us in these deep waters, into which we have been allured by professions of vast improvements in theological science. We implore help : *do not pass by on the other side*. Our demand for help is reasonable ; and if it still be refused, who will blame us, if we charge the builders and supporters of New Havenism, with setting out upon an enterprise *without counting the cost* ?

But how can any person *pretend* to the consistency of the New Haven Professors, when he compares the long paragraph quoted in Letter XI. with the declaration, "We have never affirmed that God could not exclude sin in a moral universe ?" When we consider what the Profes-

sors, by their representative, *have* affirmed, that the theory of God's ability to prevent sin, leads to Universalism, to Infidelity, and Atheism; when they have been so minute and confident as to attempt to point out *how* the theory leads to this downward course; when we are told that it is the very scheme which Voltaire and other Atheists made use of in their wicked devices against all government, all social order, and all religion; when we are informed that nothing but his inconsistencies saves a man from being the worst of heretics, if he believes that God is able to prevent sin; and yet hear from the same quarter, "We have never affirmed that God could not exclude sin in a moral universe," shall we be told that all this is consistent! What, then, in the universe is inconsistent—what in the name of common sense *can* be inconsistent? If any mortal will undertake to prove, through the press, that the writings of the Professors on these specified points are consistent with themselves, I will pledge myself to be a subscriber; and if he *should succeed*, I think he ought to be placed in the temple of fame, and above him he who shall invent perpetual motion. It is trying to patience, that there should be such a holding on to a scheme, which is a baseless fabric, but which must be taught so many of our excellent young men every year, and carried about the world as the result of the most profound wisdom. I do not believe a case in theology has ever occurred, since the discovery of America, thought to be of so much consequence, which has presented a stronger temptation to think of the story concerning *the mountain and the mouse*, in an ancient poet.

But it is my object in this letter to show, not only a gross inconsistency in the writings of the Professors, but a complete contradiction. After a labor of at least seven years to convince the world of the vast importance of believing their scheme, they say conjointly over their own signatures, "We have never affirmed that God *could* not exclude sin from a moral universe." Have they never affirmed it? How, then, has it come to pass, that they have written, and lectured, and preached, and encouraged others to preach, that God had already done all he could do for the salvation of sinners, while sinners continued impenitent? Is not this *affirming*, that God could not exclude sin, while the very object of such strange communications, was, to convince sinners that what remained to be done, *they must do themselves*? If the Professors could be understood, this was prominent in their preaching—they labored hard to be so understood. If there is no falsehood between two affirmations which so completely contradict each other, then I must despair of knowing what is the opposite of truth. It has been common for the Professors to say to impenitent sinners, directly, affirmatively, "God has done all he can do for your salvation," *while he had not prevented them from*



*sinning a single day in the course of their lives.* Will they then come forward and say, "We have never affirmed that God *could* not exclude sin?" If I can understand what an affirmation is, they *have* affirmed it repeatedly, directly, and before many witnesses; and witnesses too, who were much troubled when they heard such assertions, and who will not forget them. They have seemed to glory in this peculiarity of their scheme, which they have thought reached the conscience far better, than that which gives God the control of the heart. It was too late for them to make their denial to the public in 1835. It is necessary that they should be met with as much positiveness as they have assumed on this subject. They *have* taught that God could not exclude sin; and I hope to be excused for stating circumstances. One of their pupils preached in my hearing in these words: "Sinners, God has done all he can do for your salvation. Christ has done all he can do for your salvation. The Holy Spirit has done all he can do for your salvation," &c. A few days afterward, an aged man, who had leaned in part on Universalism for many years, was hopefully converted. He was brought into the liberty of the gospel in the night. I saw him early next morning, and in all the ardor of a young convert he addressed me as follows: "Mr. N., I cannot agree with Mr. —. He told me that God had done all he could for my salvation; but if he had not done more for me than I could do for myself, I should have perished forever. I wrestled with him in prayer two hours last night, and he had mercy on my soul." Though he spoke after this manner to others, as well as to me, in the simplicity of his heart, without the least prejudice against Mr. —, I feared the consequences; for it was a time of great excitement. But I thought it my duty to let the very exceptionable preaching pass in silence, though it distressed me when I heard it, and though it was most evident that the Holy Spirit had set his seal of reprobation upon it. Not a word was said on the subject between the preacher and myself; and I do not know to this day why, unless it was from the impulse of his conscience, that he asked me several weeks afterwards, to give him a more detailed account of the conversion referred to. He asked me if he said what that hearer understood? I replied in the affirmative. He then answered me thus. I SUPPOSE, THEN, I SAID WRONG. I loved that brother before; but he now raised himself higher in my estimation than ever. He acted like an honorable man and a Christian. I now felt that the grace of God in exercise, would annihilate such doctrines without ceremony. But it was less than a year afterward, that one of the Theological Professors preached the same things at Norwich, to the grief, I believe, of nearly all the humble piety in the place. I have been glad that I did not hear Jehovah belied on the occasion! Yes,



there are many who testify, that the preacher told the unconverted part of his audience, that God had already done all he ever could do for their salvation ; but three years afterwards, it seems he declared, conjunctly with his colleagues, that he had never affirmed that God could not exclude sin from a moral universe. After the striking evidence I had had of the displeasure of the Holy Spirit against the doctrine of God's inability, in the very interesting experience of my neighbor and the spontaneous confession of the ministerial brother, I did hope that the unscriptural, unworthy scheme would no more grate human ears. That its grave was dug. How then did I feel that a master in Israel, one who sailed so high, should give his testimony against the ability of Jehovah, to do so much as to convert and consequently, save from sin, a single impenitent sinner ! But this shock, after all, was not half so great as it was to learn that this same Professor did deny in print, what he had positively asserted, and that *he has since held on with the tenacity of death, and taught the same inability in God, which he proclaimed in Norwich*. And after all this, must we be gravely told, that there is not so much as an inconsistency in what the Professors have said on this subject ? What will be the end of so extensive a determination to uphold men, whose element seems to be philosophy and vain deceit, while truth is left to take care of itself ? Are truth and falsehood to be alike vindicated and applauded, because those who fill high stations can adopt one or the other, according to circumstances ? What is to become of us, if such apparent untruthfulness is to be passed over without gospel investigation ? What an example this is setting the churches ! It appears to me to be giving a deadly blow to all discipline—that it is an attempt to cover sin ; and to raise some, Popelike, above human responsibility. An effectual check ought to be given to such lawlessness as soon as possible, or it will feel itself too strong to submit to those rules of Christ, which are absolutely essential to the order and purity of his kingdom. I fear that it already depends upon its own dignity to overawe and outlive opposition. It cannot stoop so low as to accommodate long aggrieved brethren by a syllable of apology. Haughty silence, it seems, is good enough for them ! Has old, conscientious Connecticut come to this ?

## LETTER XIII.

2 COR. 1; 12.—“FOR OUR REJOICING IS THIS, THE TESTIMONY OF OUR CONSCIENCE, THAT IN SIMPLICITY AND GODLY SINCERITY, NOT WITH FLESHLY WISDOM, BUT BY THE GRACE OF GOD, WE HAVE HAD OUR CONVERSATION IN THE WORLD.”

SINCERITY is honesty of purpose in what we say or do. It stands opposed to hypocrisy, and all kinds and degrees of deception. It is an expression of truth, and consequently is the only ground of confidence in one another. The moment we distrust the sincerity of a man in what he says or does, that moment we begin to lose confidence in him. Hence the reason, why the scriptures so often enjoin the duty of sincerity, is obvious. The want of it implies an attempt to deceive others and exposes ourselves to be the objects of suspicion. Insincerity, therefore, is one of those sins, which carries a punishment along with it, and is destructive of the Christian character. It is no wonder then, that the apostles made it a specific object, to be sincere in all their communications. They believed just as they said; and it was to them a source of joy, that their consciences bore testimony to the sincerity which they were sure they manifested through the course of their ministry. In the opinion of Paul, that sincerity which he was enabled to practice, stood opposed to “fleshly wisdom”—“That in simplicity and godly sincerity, *not with fleshly wisdom*, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.” By fleshly wisdom, he must have intended the wisdom which flows spontaneously from the carnal heart—a wisdom which rejects not such management as is supposed to be best adapted to carry a favorite point—that wisdom, which forgets, or overlooks principle in its zeal to accomplish its purpose, and can, without scruple, evade, deny, assert, magnify, diminish, use sophistry or duplicity, at its pleasure. In the employment of such arts, the ungodly world have been busy from time immemorial. Without doubt the inspired writers, both in the Old and New Testaments, had reference to such management, when they spoke of the craftiness of the wise—of the disputers of this world, and of their foolishness and vanity. It was a special object with Paul and the other apostles to avoid the workings of this fleshly wisdom. They were inclined to indulge it like all the rest of Adam’s apostate race; and it was among various other things of which they found they must deny themselves. They *did* deny themselves, and enjoyed the benefit in the testimony of their con-

sciences. They were not only sincere, but their sincerity was godly. They wished not, like many in this depraved world, to shield themselves under the notion of sincerity, whatever might be its motive and end. They endeavored to glorify God, in exhibiting the truth and practicing righteousness, with all their souls. In this sense, they lived in simplicity and godly sincerity.

Many disturbances originate in our world for the want of such a spirit: and it appears to me it is very rare to find insincerity practiced on so large a scale as it seems to be in the efforts of the Theological Professors at New Haven, and their coadjutors, relating to what is called New Divinity. Had they fearlessly adopted the theory which their famous supposition introduced, and endeavored to maintain it without any drawback, the case would have been very different. It is true, in the opinion of some (not in mine) they might have been deemed more heretical than they are now; and such a course might have led to a separation which does not yet exist. But it would have worn the common appearance of sincerity, such as I think cannot be seen in the way the supposition has been managed. The Professors set out with great zeal, by means of a possible supposition, merely to make, as they would probably say, some improvements in theology; but they are such improvements as would completely overturn our theological system if carried into effect. Under the head of a mere supposition, assertions and maxims are made, which, so far from taking a hypothetical form, are expressed in positive terms and have every appearance of full, settled belief; and they are insisted on as truths of immense importance. One of them is the proposition, *that man has the power of contrary choice*. This is advocated as positive belief, and books are written to prove it; and it is one of the points, which the New Divinity part of the community consider it their duty to vindicate, with the same zeal as they do any other fundamental maxim. Now this is a part of their hypothetical scheme; and who does not see that on their own principle, it has nothing positive in it? It simply *may be true*, that man as a free agent has the power of contrary choice. *It never should assume* the form of a positive assertion, for this is expressly contrary to what the Professors have pretended. In like manner, when it is said, "that moral agents can do wrong under all possible preventing influence," the proposition is well known to spring from the supposition, that God *may* not have been able to prevent sin; and it ought always to be stated hypothetically. It should come to us in *this* form. It *may be* true, that moral agents can do wrong under all possible preventing influence. The inventors of it are under obligation to hold this illustration as doubtful, as they do the supposition itself; but as they have

not done it, a constant deception has been practiced upon us, and we have a right to feel injured by it. It is a public abuse.

Again. It is a part of the hypothetical speculations of the theological Professors *to declare positively* to impenitent sinners, that God has done all he can for them, or that he has done all he can for them up to the present time ; while they ought to have said, *It may be* that God has done all, &c. Such treatment of sinners on the momentous concerns of their souls has appeared to me to be fraught with an unscriptural and dangerous unfairness—it is a trying of experiments with them, in some of the most delicate moments of their existence, when those who deal with them ought to be specially careful to adhere as closely to the scriptures as possible. It is to advance things to them as positively true, when nothing more is intended than that it *may be so*, and at a time when every suggestion made ought to convey truth the most clear and indisputable ! Neither is this all ; for while on the one hand, they have adventured to make bold assertions and establish positions and maxims which turn out to be merely hypothetical when examined to the bottom ; they endeavor on the other hand, to make the community believe, that they hold to the supreme independence of God, in the sense of the Westminster Catechism, and yet will not give up their supposition, that God may not be able to prevent sin. Is it not then a sober truth, that the Professors do not tell what they believe, in as definite a manner as the place they occupy, demands ? Do they believe positively, that God is supremely independent, that he has the perfect control of the hearts of all his moral creatures ? How can they be sincere in this belief, and still hold on to their supposition, which certainly renders this belief doubtful ! And especially when they endeavor to fortify their suppositions with positive positions and fundamental maxims ? Though the declaration is very far from being pleasant to me, I still feel it to be my duty to say, that I cannot perceive that sincerity on some of the most essential points in theology, which is necessary to confidence. Therefore, without further light it can be no satisfaction to me to hear sermons from their lips, which are clothed in language entirely and highly orthodox. The question about sincerity will come up. Sermons and professions can be of no avail, if they will not positively withdraw their supposition, and all its positions and conclusions. If they believe what their supposition teaches, let them come out and boldly deny every thing contrary to it. Let them say, they do not believe in that supreme independence in God, to which, they must know all real Calvinists hold. Let them deny, that God *has* a perfect control over the hearts of all moral beings, and turn their supposition into a theory. If they would do this and fearlessly pro-



claim it to the world, I would approve their honesty, however much I might be pained with their errors. It is too late in the day to have a treacherous theology. It is more than a church ought to bear in a single pastor. Much less ought a company of theological Professors to be tolerated in it. By it the Christian world generally, more especially New England, is suffering at the present time. The belief of the four theological Professors at Yale College ranges from the Calvinistic view of divine independence, down to the certainty, that this view leads "to Universalism, to Infidelity, and to Atheism." They have all the intermediate space to work in. They can believe, suppose, and deny, and deny, and suppose, and believe, at their pleasure. Such play ground would do much better, if human responsibility consisted only in name—if deception had no wrong in it—if Christian theology were a mere plaything—if God had licensed us to trifle with his truth—if there were no judgment to come—no heaven, no hell, no God.



## LETTER XIV.

GALATIANS, 4; 16.—"AM I THEREFORE BECOME YOUR ENEMY, BECAUSE I TELL YOU THE TRUTH?"

IN my sixth letter, as will be recollected, I transcribed a sentence, which was in one of my letters to Dr. Goodrich, and which gave him great offence. In this communication, I propose to transcribe more of the same letter, and make occasional remarks as I proceed.

I said to him, "I take it for granted, that your colleagues agree with you on the question you have answered; and since you profess to be orthodox according to my views of orthodoxy, on the doctrine of Jehovah's independent supremacy, his supreme independence, I propose another thing: I ask you kindly, and respectfully, yet earnestly, to renounce publicly the supposition, 'that sin, (as to God's prevention,) may have been a necessary incident to the existence of a moral system;' and not only the supposition itself, but all your reasoning upon it.

"First, without such renunciation, you cannot convince one part of the community that you are sincere in your pretensions to orthodoxy on the doctrine of the divine supremacy. We must have a *positive* belief, with no systematical supposition attached to it, either directly or indi-



rectly, in any degree, shape, form, or manner whatever. Common honesty requires this.

“Secondly: You certainly have no more authority or right to institute a supposition involving any inability in God, in relation to what he would be glad to do, than you have to institute a supposition involving a doubt concerning his moral character, or his existence. Accordingly you have put a weapon in the hands of every heretic and atheistical mocker on earth. They can *suppose* as well as you, and with as much propriety; and it would be folly on your part to attempt to silence them, unless you would, in the first place, renounce your own supposition.

“Thirdly: You seem to be more desirous to subject the word of God to your schemes, than to subject your schemes to the word of God. Why do we hear about Jehovah’s being ‘restricted in the production of happiness,’ when the Bible declares, that Christ is ‘*over all*, God blessed forever?’—that he is ‘far above every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.’ In view of many such sweeping declarations of the word of God, is it entirely modest to proclaim, ‘that the case is so plain, it is so easy to imagine a better world, or a better universe than the present, that the mind can never rest in the assurance that its author is benevolent, without supposing that he is restricted in the production of happiness by some impossibility involving a contradiction!’ that ‘here we must rest, or deny the benevolence of an infinite Creator?’ I must say, that I believe the writer of these sentences, did, at the time, value his speculations higher than Jehovah’s plain declarations; and I shall believe that he continues to value them higher, unless he takes back such monstrous, abominable words.”

As the next paragraph in my letter to Dr. Geodrich contains substantially what is found on the foregoing pages of this work, it will be omitted. In my same letter I proceeded to state,

“Fifthly: One peculiarly improper use to which you apply your supposition is, you make it all the proof you advance of Jehovah’s sincerity as a law-giver, in case any one tells you that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good. Thus, the moral character of God is thrown into suspicion, by your most exceptionable speculations; for if you knew any better way to prove the sincerity of God against objections, would you not use it? What advantage you give the followers of Abner Kneeland and Fanny Wright! You have fairly opened the door for them to say, ‘Your pretended belief in religion is sheer hypocrisy. You tell us how certain it is, that your God will fulfill all his promises, and all he threatens; yet you cannot prove he is sincere; *you only suppose he is.*’ And it is a peculiarly mortifying circumstance to your

Old School brethren, that because there is yet a visible fellowship between them and you, and because you and your colleagues are from your stations deemed leaders in theology, *they* must be exposed to bear the same reproach with you, while from their inmost souls they abhor all your hypothetical speculations in relation to God's truth."

"Lest it should be imagined that I misrepresent you, I refer to the following words from one of the principal expounders of your scheme. He says, 'Among these speculations I include the New Haven hypothesis, as well as all others, which are designed to answer objections to the doctrines of grace.' This is simply carrying out your own principle. You found an objection against God's sincerity, and you interposed a supposition to answer it. In the above quotation, we find the same method is to be adopted in relation to the doctrines of grace without exception; and on the same principle the supposition may be applied to the truth of divine revelation, to all the attributes of God, and to his existence. Now it is well known, that objections have been brought against each doctrine of revealed, and what is sometimes called natural, religion. On this plan, an objector can make you turn all the articles of your creed into a bundle of suppositions in two hours. Here is the strength of your religious belief. Here is the way in which the four Professors present themselves before the public as the leading defenders of the truth. Here is the end of the wonderful improvement in theological science. Here is the grand result of that wisdom of man, which is the Bible only secondary to his self-contrived schemes. This is bad. It throws a mountain of disgrace over the Puritans in Connecticut, not excepting the Corporation of Yale College. (It is enough  
"There is no end to the framing of suppositions; and they are as well adapted to one branch of knowledge as another. What if the Professors in the academical department of Yale College should find seeming difficulties in their several departments, while there would be none if they adhered to the text books; and in order to extricate themselves should prepare a supposition for each troublesome case, and then let it go, to the high gratification of every blockhead in the college? Should they do thus, the whole mass of scientific men in the country would point the finger of scorn at them. Yet this would be far less exceptionable than to pursue such a course in relation to Jehovah's revealed truth, which is abundantly sufficient for all the purposes of religious knowledge."

*Remarks.* The word of God was given to us expressly for this purpose.

In Dr. Goodrich's last letter, he speaks of my being excited when I wrote to him. If by being "excited," he intends that I indulge sinful

feelings, and if he is correct on this point, I deeply regret it. I would not sin against my God. But I freely acknowledge that I have feelings, strong feelings, distressing feelings, when, according to my understanding, all the sweet truths which saints can feed upon in this present life, or in heaven, are put into jeopardy, and this glorious and fearful name, **THE LORD THY GOD**, is treated as the angelic hosts above would never wish or dare to treat it, by the needless and reckless speculations of the theological Professors at Yale College. If there is such a thing as holy indignation I would cherish it on this occasion; and I believe there is such a thing.

Referring to a letter which I wrote before to Dr. Goodrich, I say, "In my letter I argued, that if man as a free agent has the power of contrary choice, it must be so with God, as *he* is also a free agent; and to prove that the power of contrary choice is not essential to free agency, I introduced the passage of scripture, that 'it is impossible for God to lie.' You reply in these words: 'Nor has it been considered the best mode of reasoning to argue from the infinite to the finite—from the perfections of God, which are involved in mystery, to the nature of the human mind, whose operations may be brought to the test of consciousness.' But as you without doubt admit that God is a free agent, do you intend to insinuate, that *his* free agency is destitute of what you make an essential quality of *man's* free agency? If it is not proper to argue from 'the infinite to the finite,' it is on account of God's *superiority*, not *inferiority* to man. Hence it is rather singular that you should reverse the order of things, and presume that because God is *deficient* in the qualities of a free agent in your sense of these terms, therefore, we must not argue from 'the infinite to the finite.' Why not say we must not argue from the finite to the infinite, since the finite is made superior to the infinite? I was not expecting that you would adopt such an expedient to rid yourself of Bible truth in order to preserve your darling dogma about the power of contrary choice. It is unworthy of him who has been so successfully perfecting Dr. Webster's capital Dictionary. Here is one of my strong objections to the whole scheme of metaphysical speculations, which has originated among the theological Professors at Yale College. The word of God must not stand in *their* way."

In a letter from Dr. Goodrich, dated Sept. 29, 1848, he referred me to a sermon of Dr. Emmons, on Acts 27; 31, in which he maintains that "men have natural power to prevent the decrees of God from taking effect." "Men have natural power to frustrate those divine decrees, which they are appointed to fulfill." In my answer to Dr. Goodrich I say, "it is nearly half a century since I knew of Dr. Emmons' saying that man has natural power to break the divine decrees," &c.

I knew and greatly respected Dr. Emmons from my childhood. But my father had an old book, which he taught me is true, and which I deem of higher authority than Dr. Emmons. In that book we read, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." In the same book, Christ is represented as saying, "Without me ye can do nothing." Now I believe these declarations to be strictly true, metaphysicians to the contrary notwithstanding. The notions, therefore, that man has natural power to break the decrees of God, that he has the power of contrary choice, that he can do wrong or right, under all possible preventing influence, if true in any sense, are so only metaphysically, or in theory; that is, *merely in the imagination*; and all the good they do is to swell up worldly wisdom, to make certain people stare, and to darken the scriptures. Since I have the word of God before me, you cannot convince me of any utility in them, if you present me with a pile of D. D.s, L. L. D.s, and S. T. P.s to support them, which shall reach to the moon. Dr. Emmons lived to see some of his speculations turned against his own system of doctrines by you and your colleagues. Accordingly, when he learned that one of his scholars was opposed to your speculations, he requested him in very strong terms to continue to oppose you."

I would now remark, that though Dr. Emmons held to a nature of things which God could not control, as we find in a sermon of his from Isa. 5; 20, yet it seems that this nature of things, in his view, is always in God's favor. According to Dr. Emmons, God can always do just as he pleases. Perhaps there never was a theologian who dwelt more upon the doctrine of divine independence, (or divine sovereignty,) than Dr. Emmons. But on the other hand, the theological Professors at New Haven have found this nature of things to be in Jehovah's way. It is supposed that he is so restricted by it that he is eternally unable to do what he otherwise would accomplish; that it shackled him in his counsel before he created the universe, and that he has been shackled ever since, and ever will be. Yea, it seems, according to New Havenism, that the nature of things has operated much more to the disadvantage of God, than of man. *It makes man the giant, and God the child!* (O man! do you not pity your Maker!) We may here perceive what the Christian world is coming to, by beginning theology not where the Bible begins it—by vainly attempting to look beyond God, and by laying pillars for our theological temple in chaos, in eternal confusion, where modesty and common sense and piety demand everlasting silence!

I now proceed to quote more of my letter to Dr. Goodrich. "It is worthy of notice, also, that Dr. Emmons did not make *the power of contrary choice* so prominent in his system as it is in yours. According



to Miss Catharine Beecher, this dogma *is the whole foundation* on which the peculiarities of New Divinity rest. Your whole scheme, (as I understand Miss Beecher,) which has made so much trouble in the country—which to a very great extent has produced jealousy, alienation of affections, dissention, discord among brethren, and even painful separations, is built upon what you do not pretend in your letter is *practically* true. Here is that world of wonders into which the ministers and churches have been so strongly urged to look. Here is the demonstration of the swift march of mind, and the gigantic strides of theological improvement. Here is “the happy alternative of Calvinism—the universal interpreter of the Bible—the solver of theological doubts—the measuring reed to span Jehovah—the magnifying glass to describe man when thoroughly improved by it—and in short the direct way to the millennium.” This wonderful scheme makes no pretensions to be founded on the general current of the scriptures, nor on one solitary text, nor even on a fact in experimental philosophy, either physical or mental; but simply a mere metaphysical notion! It is extremely painful to me to consider what high claims it has made to gain the credence of the Christian world; for I deem it to be an unscriptural, anti-protestant scheme, far better suited to the character of the dark ages, than of the nineteenth century, when a Bible can be procured for fifty cents. Yet this “baseless fabric,” this caper of worldly wisdom, this “vain deceit,” this freak of the imagination, has become the subject of grave history in theology. It has been trumpeted over the world, as though it contained all the combined wisdom of Bacon, Locke and Edwards—as though it would descend to future generations as the essence of a great era of light—as though posterity would be prepared to pity the ignorance of the world till its transcendent effulgence burst out. The scheme would form an exercise far more appropriate for an insane hospital, than for a school of the prophets; and it is a remarkable fulfillment of 2 Timothy, 4; 4—“They shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”

The conclusion of my letter to Dr. Goodrich, from which I have quoted so much, reads thus: “It is plain to me, therefore, that it will be honorable for you to renounce all your hypothetical schemes. ‘To the law and the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.’ We need never to be ashamed to own that we have been in the fault, for this is only saying that we are wiser to-day than we were yesterday.”

“Whatever communication you may make with me on the subjects of this letter, will not be satisfactory unless it be made also with the public.”



The reader is probably curious to know how Dr. Goodrich answered this letter. Before I proceed to show, it is proper to state that his next letter filled five unusually large sheets, (quarto,) closely written, in which he says: "I have answered, as I believe, every *argument* contained in your printed letter, and in your private communications." I will *first* notice how Dr. Goodrich answered my printed letter; or rather, how he passed over in silence many of its most prominent topics—such as had for years given me and many others great uneasiness, and I believe not without sufficient cause.

1. He made no reply to the opinion which I fully expressed in my printed letter, that the speculations of the New Haven Professors are an illustration of Colossians, 2; 8, in which the Christian world are called upon to "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Dr. Goodrich therefore virtually acknowledges the correctness of my opinion on this point.

2. Professor Goodrich made no reply to my printed belief, that the Professors make the Bible secondary to their speculations, rather than make their speculations secondary to the Bible.

3. On page 31 of my printed letter, Dr. Goodrich chose not to notice five passages of scripture, which I introduced at one time to show how clearly the word of God contains the doctrine of the divine independence, contrary to the Professors' speculations.

4. Dr. Goodrich took no notice of 2 Corinthians, 1; 18—20, which I introduced and commented upon, pages 72, 73, in my printed letter, and which most pointedly condemns the *Yea—Nay*—course of the Professors. Neither,

5. Did he refer to the example of Christ, recorded Mark, 14; 36, which I adduced, pages 76, 77, to show that the prayer of the Saviour in his agony administers a tremendous rebuke to all who talk about such an inability in God, as is the corner-stone of the New Haven Professors' speculations.

6. Dr. Goodrich did not touch the argument in my printed letter, on pages 21—24, in which I show how the speculations of himself and colleagues throw "everything in the moral universe into a state of uncertainty."

7. Dr. Goodrich has said not a word, by way of apology for the extraordinary irreverent manner, in which the New Haven speculations treat Jehovah, which I exposed, pages 10—14, and which I feel bound to expose whenever I can.

8. He has not disproved the five changes, to which the famous *supposition* is subjected, as I explained it on page 18 of my printed letter.

Were it necessary, I could state many other important points, which Dr. Goodrich passed over in silence ; and I believe he did so for the simple reason, that he could not gainsay what was advanced. Why he said he had answered every argument, I know not.

9. One thing more must not be omitted, which is the manner in which Dr. Goodrich treats what I said in my printed letter pages 46, 47, beginning with this sentence. "You must show the public that you can prove the sincerity of God as a Law-giver, without resorting to a mere supposition for the purpose." In following up this most reasonable demand, I say, page 47, "I acknowledge I have been amazed at your oversight on this subject—by reason of which you have seemed to me to have exposed the moral character of God and the doctrines of grace, and consequently all true religion, to the sneers of infidelity and atheism." Several months after my letter to the Professors was printed, I wrote a short letter to another minister, who I expected, would show the contents to the Professors, which was accordingly done. In that letter, among two or three other things, I proposed that they should prove the sincerity of God as a lawgiver, against all objections, without resorting to a possible supposition for the purpose. Dr. Goodrich wrote to the minister referred to, and he showed me the letter. I was surprised to find that it contained nothing on this subject. I then wrote directly to Dr. Goodrich, and before I closed, I renewed my request, that the Professors would prove the "sincerity of God as a lawgiver, against all objections, without resorting to a mere, non-committal supposition for the purpose." Not long afterward, I received a letter from Dr. Goodrich, in which he freely discussed other topics, but passed over in silence this concerning God's sincerity. I then wrote to him what is transcribed on the subject, in this "Letter to the Christian Public." After all this requesting and pressing, on a subject as fundamental and momentous as is the moral character of God, what, gentle reader, do you think I have at last received in reply ? It is simply this : "With all the obliquity of mind you impute to us, we are not quite so silly as to attempt any *direct* and *positive* proof of the divine sincerity, by a mere supposition of possible truth." I ask, why then the Professors do not attempt a direct and positive proof of the divine sincerity, *without* a supposition ? is it fair to put all they have to communicate on so serious a subject in one evasive sentence ? Why not attempt to prove the sincerity of God, positively ? This is what is demanded of every person, who pretends to be a theologian ; and nothing short of such positive proof will answer. Can the Professors hope, that they are dealing with a community that will suffer them to evade this subject forever ? If they are involved in difficulty they have done

it themselves, and are responsible for the consequences. In by-gone days, it was taken for granted, that every person, who claimed to teach theology, had a system, all the parts of which he would at least *attempt* to vindicate by direct and positive proof. Whether his arguments were conclusive was not the question. But it was expected, that the teacher of theology did himself fully believe what he taught; and that he *believed* he could vindicate his system, especially the most essential part of it, without a supposition. But to my understanding, it is as clear as that the day follows the night, and the night the day, that the theological Professors at Yale College *cannot* or *will not* prove the sincerity of God as a lawgiver, any farther than a barely possible supposition does it. They have shown the public, that the doctrine, that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good, in their view impeaches the sincerity of God. They have unequivocally shown the public, that the way to meet this objection is, *to suppose* that God is unable to prevent sin. Now if they would avow the opinion, that God is *not* able to prevent sin, and persevere in it, they would maintain at least a positive opinion on the subject, whether it be sound or not. But this they will not do. They will *not affirm* that God is unable to prevent sin; and on the other hand, they fully believe, that if he *is* able to prevent sin, but does not, he is without sincerity. Where else in all Christendom is there a professed theologian, who would be willing to risk his character with such doubts about the sincerity of God? Yet, notwithstanding this awful chasm in their system of divinity, how largely they have talked, these twenty years, about accurate distinctions, and about the philosophy of religion. We must understand the vast difference there is between what is *necessary* and what is *certain*! We must understand, that we cannot be free agents, unless we have the power of contrary choice to such an extent, that we can regenerate ourselves without the aid of the divine Spirit—that we can do wrong (or right) under all possible preventing influence. We must understand, that all such extra ability in man detracts proportionably from the ability of God. He is represented as having “his match,” as having done all he can, while the object of his ardent desire is not accomplished—as being glad to do more than he can. Thousands of hearers have been taught such pretended first principles as are designed to show what Jehovah cannot do in relation to what he would do if he could. Yea, in a certain case, God is put so much beneath man, as the child is beneath a giant! Amidst this shipwreck of the competency of Jehovah, to manage his own concerns as he would be glad to do, these theological Professors have been strongly urged at least, to shield the *moral* character of God from suspicion—to let us know *positively*, that he is sincere

as a lawgiver. And how are we treated in this most reasonable and earnest and repeated request? It is by silence and evasion! "Which strain at a gnat and swallow a camel."

My beloved ministerial brethren of New England: When we adventured to enter into the gospel ministry, was it not the command of God, and the expectation of men, even of scoffers, that the character of the Most High should ever be venerated by us? That we should ever treat all his attributes with the most profound respect, reverence and awe? Can we believe it ever entered the mind of an angel in heaven, that we should subject the infinite and glorious God to be daguerreo-typed by the standard of man's invention, and let fall the seeds of skepticism concerning his sincerity? Or that in the article of free agency we should place man as far above him, as a giant is superior to a child?

Dear brethren, as shocking as these things may seem, I see not but we must rely upon my representation as strictly true; for Dr. Goodrich has reviewed, at his leisure, what I have communicated to him and his colleagues on these points of difference between us, but has confined his strictures to other topics. That he should do thus, under his peculiar circumstances, clearly shows that he has nothing to say by way of defense, in relation to the topics brought to view in this letter. *He knows* I have made no mis-statement with consideration.

For many years I have been much troubled with the belief, whether correct or not, that some ministers and editors in New England have manifested a degree of connivance at the New Haven speculations, which is a betrayal of the most sacred and responsible trust ever committed to man, namely, that of defending the sacredness of this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD. Brethren, ought we ever to forget, that "the Lord thy God is a jealous God?" Who wants more evidence of the rottenness and dangerous tendency of a scheme, than its treating the name of his God with marked irreverence?

Having considered how Dr. Goodrich answered my printed letter, I proceed to show what order he has thought proper to take of my letter to him, the greatest portion of which is before the reader. I would say then, that he has said nothing satisfactory in reply to the declaration I made, that the Professors have so left the sincerity of God as a law-giver, as to expose themselves to the attacks of infidels. Neither has he touched my argument, that on the principle of a distinguished expounder of the New Haven hypotheses, all the articles of faith in both natural and revealed religion, may be turned into a bundle of suppositions, whenever they are opposed. Neither has Dr. Goodrich a word to say against my statement, that according to his own admission, New Divinity, which has made such a noise in the world, has "no preten-



sions to be founded on the general current of the scriptures, nor on one solitary text, nor even on a fact in experimental philosophy, either physical or mental ; but simply on a mere metaphysical notion." I fully believed my statements correct against New Divinity, when I penned them. I now have the most satisfactory evidence that I made no important mistake ; it is the evidence which an opponent furnishes. I thank Dr. Goodrich for the service he has rendered me on this intricate subject. Though I was sure I was correct, yet my testimony alone would not be so convincing to others, as to have his tacit admission follow, on the most essential points. This admission I have—an admission he would never make, without rigid necessity. Also, I am indebted to Dr. Goodrich, for showing clearly, as may be seen in the sixth and eighth letters, how eagerly some men will chase phantoms, and even make them a part of their divinity.

My last letter to Dr. Goodrich was extremely offensive to him. He has much to say in his reply about my discourteous and ungentlemanly treatment of him ; and toward the close of his letter are these two sentences : " I will only say, that I do not consider myself as under any obligation to continue a correspondence which subjects me to such treatment, I must therefore decline any further communication with you on these subjects."

Dr. Goodrich is one of the last men upon earth to complain of ill treatment from those brethren who deem it their duty to deal plainly with him. He is one of the four, who has taken advantage of the confiding spirit of his brethren, in a time of great peace and prosperity among the ministers and churches, and has with his colleagues introduced such philosophical schemes as have destroyed harmony, and filled with deep regret, the hearts of multitudes. I am one of those, whose feelings have been deeply wounded, and have often been shocked, during many years, at the unscriptural liberties, which these gentlemen have seen fit to take with God. Dr. Goodrich does not know all the sleepless nights, which he and his associates have occasioned to such of their brethren, as thought they early saw that nothing but mischief would follow New Divinity speculations. Indeed, I have evidence, which satisfies me, that Dr. Goodrich was the *very person*, who first set in motion the wheels of strife, by adopting parts of Chevalier Ramsay's skeptical scheme, which Dr. Bellamy refuted a century ago. To my understanding, such speculations were totally inconsistent with what the Westminster Catechism teaches, and would, if not checked, break up the foundations of Puritan Orthodoxy, and *every positive* system of theology, and be the entering wedge to universal skepticism. I shall not disguise, that one of the most repulsive features in all the speculations of Dr.

Goodrich and his colleagues, as far as they opened to my understanding, was the annihilation of that supremacy of God, which I then believed, (and believe still,) to be essential to the idea, we ought always to attach to the great First Cause. In the course of my life, I have heard preaching of many grades, from the extreme of Emmonsism, to gross Universalism; and in no other case have I ever heard the Lord Jehovah so belittled as by the propagators of New Havenism. Such preaching has distressed me greatly. If I must hear my God degraded so low, let it not be done by those who lay the least claim to New England Orthodoxy. It may be expected of those who glory in modern transcendentalism, but not of the professed advocates of the Westminster Catechism. The exclamation has repeatedly been, "What a God they make of him!" As Dr. Goodrich has brought up the subject of *sensibility*, my mind will run back to those days of affliction, when we heard about such a God as we had not been accustomed to adore; but a new one, as we thought, to be imposed upon us. Some circumstances of those days of mischievous speculations are still fresh in my memory. It came to me directly from one of the Professors: "They may squirm as much as they please; *but we are determined to drive it through.*" These conciliating, sweet words were uttered in reference to the peaceable Old School brethren, who, God be praised, were established in the faith. *This was all kind and courteous*, and gentlemanly! At a certain time, when I was greatly exercised on the subject of the Professors' speculations, an aged deacon called upon me, and with deep concern asked me, if I had changed my sentiments. It appeared upon examination, that there was an electioneering campaign going on, and I was by mistake marshaled on the New Haven side. Did this please me? About this time it was reported, that all the ministers in Connecticut under forty years of age were on "our side." But as wounding as such things were to the feelings of those ministers, who thought they knew what they were about, they were almost insignificant, compared with what followed. I shall transcribe what I addressed to the Professors in my printed letter, on page forty-first. "Here I take the liberty to state, that your treatment of those whom you grieved, was unbrotherly and unkind. You were the whole cause of our troubles; but when you found it was not as easy to stop them as to commence them, then you attempted, as I have reason to believe, to turn the odium from yourselves, and let it fall on the heads of the Orthodox. You may yet explain this affair, but as it has hitherto appeared, it has shown a disingenuousness, which is a worm at the root of all friendship and respect. What baser passions in the human breast than such as can thus trifle with the feelings of quiet brethren, whose only crime consists in determining to maintain what they consider to be the

truth as it is in Jesus, and who have independence enough to oppose daring and reckless innovators, however elevated may be their stations."

Dr. Goodrich knows that this statement is correct ; for if it were not, he would have signified his dissent in his correspondence with me. For aught that appears, he deems such treatment of his brethren kind and courteous, doing as he would be done by ! Very polite ! As he believes he has answered every argument in my printed Letter, it is very probable he read the book through. But I conclude that what I have now quoted, made no impression on his mind. He knew not but that he and his associates had treated their Old School brethren in a gentlemanly manner, very polite ! If we *were* accused of "heresy-hunting," and "contending about the veriest trifles," while we were trying to sustain the religion of our Puritan fathers and our ordination vows, *it was all well !* If we *were* held up before the public as "disturbers of the peace," because we tried to defend the Bible truth, against hypothetical, and consequently, skeptical, attacks, *it was all well*, in view of Dr. Goodrich. It was very polite, and refined. But when I presented some truths to his mind, *in a manner not to be misunderstood* or refuted ; when I clearly pointed out the tendencies and results of his scheme, and showed him that it is not founded either on scripture or fact, but is wholly a "baseless fabric ;" it seems he thought my treatment of him too-ill-mannerly to be borne ; and has, consequently, withdrawn all intercourse with me on the subjects of debate ! "Am I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth ?"

This course of Dr. Goodrich speaks volumes. He has left New Divinity entirely defenseless, under the charges brought against it. It is therefore destined to death so far as one, and probable the only, *first* contriver is concerned. Its mortal wound is given by himself ; and however protracted and gigantic may be its struggles, yet they will be dying struggles ; and all attempts to restore it will be as fruitless as would be an attempt to cure the wounded hand of a man after his head is severed from his body.

The manner in which Dr. Goodrich has left the field of discussion, where so many important and essential truths are involved, affords room for easy conjecture. It reminds one of the directions which officers give to those on guard, who are to watch the motions of the enemy in the night. If they see or hear any thing suspicious, the orders are, "*Fire and run.*"

NOTE. I have heard, that Dr. Goodrich thinks I have no right to make a public use of his valedictory letter to me. But why not ? Did I not plainly notify him before he wrote, that "Whatever communication you may make with me on the sub-

jects of this letter will not be satisfactory unless it be made also with the public." Had an opponent of mine given *me* such a caution, and I should write to him afterward, I cannot conceive that I should have the least reason to complain, if he made such use of my letter as he pleased, provided he should not misstate, and consequently misrepresent me; and this would be wholly at my risk. But I shall not so treat Dr. Goodrich or any other man, unless by mere mistake. I profess to be as much fixed against such acts, as against any other forms of bearing false witness against my neighbor.

The reader may be assured that I have published whatever in my letter has offended Dr. Goodrich so terribly.

## LETTER XV.

GALATIANS, 2; 11-14.—“BUT WHEN PETER WAS COME TO ANTIOCH, I WITHSTOOD HIM TO THE FACE, BECAUSE HE WAS TO BE BLAMED. FOR BEFORE THAT CERTAIN CAME FROM JAMES, HE DID EAT WITH THE GENTILES; BUT WHEN THEY WERE COME HE WITHDREW, AND SEPARATED HIMSELF, FEARING THEM WHICH WERE OF THE CIRCUMCISION. AND THE OTHER JEWS DISSEMBLED LIKEWISE; INSOMUCH THAT BARNABAS ALSO WAS CARRIED AWAY WITH THEIR DISSIMULATION. BUT WHEN I SAW THAT THEY WALKED NOT UPRIGHTLY, ACCORDING TO THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL, I SAID UNTO PETER BEFORE THEM ALL, IF THOU, BEING A JEW, LIVEST AFTER THE MANNER OF THE GENTILES, AND NOT AS DO THE JEWS, WHY COMPELLEST THOU THE GENTILES TO LIVE AS DO THE JEWS.”

PAUL, according to these words, has set a proper example of frankness in cases where brethren ought to be reproved; and if the cause of the reproof be public, so should the reproof be. “*Paul said to Peter before them all.*” Said he, “I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.” The case was that of dissimulation; and he declared it boldly, with all its circumstances, without the fear or favor of any one. By the act of dissimulation practiced by Peter, Barnabas and others, Paul “saw that they walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel.” The pen of divine inspiration has carefully recorded the whole transaction, to be preserved through all time, for the instruction and warning of ministers and churches. We are plainly taught by the foregoing passage, that those who practice dissimulation do not walk uprightly according to the truth of the gospel; and they ought accordingly to be blamed; and if the offence be public, they ought to be publicly blamed—that public testimony ought to be borne against such practices so long as they are continued.

I think it will not be disputed by any one, that dissimulation is contained in that philosophy and vain deceit, which are so obviously con-



demned by an inspired apostle, in Colossians 2 ; 8. In my printed Letter to the Theological Professors at Yale college, I considered in different places, and by different illustrations, that their speculations partook of the nature of such philosophy. I made no mistake on this point ; for if I had, Dr. Goodrich would, without doubt, have noticed it, in that letter to me, in which he believes he has answered every argument I have used. The way then is prepared to show the *extent of that dissimulation*. In doing it, I shall advance no idea, which Dr. Goodrich has not seen, either in my printed Letter to the Professors, or in what I have written to him individually. I say, then, without contradiction from Dr. Goodrich, that while he and his colleagues declare their full belief in the supreme independence and infinite power of God, they use a supposition in such a manner, as to render these fundamental doctrines doubtful. That they use a supposition in such a manner, as to change the character of the divine decrees, election and regeneration ; and to render uncertain the perseverance of the saints, and all government over moral beings. That the very design of the supposition in relation to the doctrines of grace, is to answer such objections as may be brought against them.

Now an answer to an objection necessarily implies *proof*. All the *proof*, then, which the Professors propose to bring in favor of the doctrines of grace, when assailed, is made to depend on a supposition, which, from its nature, is destitute of any thing *positive*. God cannot be a holy being, unless he is sincere. But the Professors inform us, that the very object for which they at first instituted a supposition that God may not have been able to prevent sin, was to prove his sincerity as a lawgiver against what they consider an objection. A bare supposition, then, is all the proof they furnish of the divine sincerity when it is assailed. In my printed Letter to the Professors, page 18, I stated that they have presented their supposition that God may not have been able to prevent sin, in five different attitudes. "First it is a possible supposition ; secondly, it is probable and highly probable ; thirdly, it is a real positive argument ; fourthly, it changes back to nothing ; and fifthly, it springs again from nothing to be a possible supposition, a mere *may be*." I then add, "if I am not deceived, I can produce examples from your writings to prove these five changes." Thus I have fairly laid myself open to be taken up. But Dr. Goodrich, it seems, chooses to withdraw all communication with me on the subject, rather than to attempt to confute me. In short, the Professors have introduced a supposition into their theology, to be employed as it is deemed necessary ; a supposition which tends to unsettle the great fundamental doctrines of Puritan orthodoxy, and to embarrass those who would sustain them, in a direct manner. The exertions made to hold on to this supposition, or

make any use of it, by those who freely sign orthodox creeds, is as plain a case of dissimulation as ever was, or can be, practiced. Now, knowing as we do, the character and example of Paul, we need not hesitate a moment to decide what he would do, if he were living in New England at this time. He, who proclaimed to all coming generations, that he openly blamed Peter, and Barnabas, and many others, for dissimulation, would not be silent. He would speak out. It would not, with him, be a matter for calculating in dollars and cents; nor would he tremble, lest the performance of his duty should be a suicidal act. It would make no difference with him, as to the discharge of his duty, on whom the blame should fall. His only question to settle would be, whether any did not walk uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel; and he has shown that those do not thus walk, who dissemble. He had but one rule on this point in dealing with his fellow creatures. He required no more of the most illiterate, and ignorant, than that they should walk uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel. Nor could he require less of the most distinguished for wealth, or learning, or talents, or popularity, or high stations, or influence; or because they were his old familiar friends, his classmates, if you please. He would speak out, though he should bring upon his head the criticisms of his timorous friends, and the ridicule of petty periodicals. He would speak out, though for so doing he might expose himself to be called an "old blood-thirsty warrior, who never can be easy without fighting,"—though he should be charged with calling up old controversies, that had been dead and buried. Paul was one of that sort of men, who did not believe that wrong doing, would, in a few years, become out-lawed, like book accounts; or that God forgets what we should be glad to forget. He would not be afraid publicly to blame ministers and laymen now for dissimulation, any more than in former days:—no, if he had a congregation to address that would cover a whole continent, and a voice which could reach them all. And if he could not put a stop to the practice of dissembling, by his living voice, he would try his pen—that pen, which on common occasions was so condescending, kind, gentle, loving, conciliating, peaceable, meek and forgiving; but which could be terrible to "deceitful workers." I fall very far below Paul in point of wisdom and grace; yet I think I can say in truth, that for a long course of years, I have attempted to make him, next to Christ, my model in my treatment of my fellow creatures, however much I have come short. I would, like Paul, keep my eye steadily on truth and duty, and pursue them, let consequences be what they may. As I understand his course, and that which the word of God universally prescribes, it should make no difference whether public sentiment is with us or against us; or

whether there be more or fewer, who may be seen to join us ; for if we are in the right, there are, in reality, more with us than against us. The entire plainness of Paul might expose him to severe remarks in this age of gentility—how it was when he took such liberty I know not. This I know, that he perceived that Peter, and Barnabas, and others, “walked not uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel”—they used “dissimulation.” This he could not silently endure ; and who can ? He determined to reprove this fault in a public manner, without stopping to inquire, whether those who committed it were not good people ; or whether he might not overact by his great plainness, in stating the case just as it was ; or whether there might not be some anti-scriptural sympathising souls present, ready to join the accused, for no other reason than because they *were* accused. It was no question with him, whether dealing with delinquents faithfully would *set them off*, or not. Neither would he be willing to have it sounded abroad, that it was nothing but a quarrel between him and Peter, and if they would settle their quarrel between themselves, all would be well. Nor would he be reconciled to have the concern dropped, on the belief that the essence of making peace consists in hushing up delinquencies and scandals, because love will set all things right, whether there be any repentance or not. Paul would not think that a man greatly promoted truth and righteousness, even if he should pretend to be on their side, provided he must first put the friends of them down on a level with opposers in order to display the sovereignty of his umpirage. He never saw but one way to his duty, and that was the direct way. He did not wait to have others form public opinion, that he might cautiously follow it ; but he considered it his indispensable duty to do all in his power to *form* public sentiment on correct principles, let who would oppose, and try to frighten him. This course he and Silas pursued, though they made the sticklers for old customs, and any sort of peace but gospel peace, at Thessalonica, cry out, “These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also.”

As Paul called Peter to account, in an uncompromising manner, for what he saw deceptive in him, so he was careful to abstain from every thing of the kind himself. We have every reason to believe, that he was always frank—that he said nothing, wrote nothing, did nothing, calculated to mislead any one. Indeed, it is his perfect plainness, in connection with the other inspired writers, which has given so much uneasiness in the world. He found it necessary to be explicit on some doctrines, which are very offensive to the unhumiliated heart. Peter’s testimony of his writings is this : “Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you : (Peter has taken no exception to Paul’s plain dealing with him,) as also in all

his epistles speaking in them of these things ; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable, wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction." 2 Peter 3 ; 15, 16.

In as much as what Peter calls "hard to be understood," in Paul's writings, was wrested by "the unlearned and unstable, unto their own destruction," it is evident he did not intend that they *could* not apprehend their meaning ; for if it were so, they could not be said to wrest, or pervert such scriptures. Undoubtedly Peter intended, that these "unlearned and unstable," were unwilling to adhere to the plain import of some of Paul's writings, and of other sacred writers. It has ever been so since. It is not the want of understanding, at first, but it is the blindness of unbelief occasioned by an unreconciled heart, which makes some of the doctrines of the Bible so hard to be understood. A venerable pastor once told the writer, that he called upon a family in his parish, where the lady of the house was a member of his church. She was very glad to see him, and spoke to this effect : "Sir, I have been wishing to see you of late, for I have been troubled about the doctrine of election." He asked her, "Why are you troubled about that doctrine ? Is it because it is not in the Bible, or because it is there ?" "Oh," said she, "Because it *is there*." Ah ! here is the trouble.

The fact, that this doctrine is plainly revealed, (and no inspired writer is more clear and definite on the subject than Paul,) has led some to begin at an immense distance from it, to undermine it. Others have tried to find some way around it. Some have attempted to pass it over in silence ; and some have sought an alternative, or modification, which shall make it less offensive to the proud heart. I repeat, that Paul was not wanting in plainness, when he wrote what some have wrested. Paul was no non-committal ; he had nothing to conceal, or keep back. He believed that truth had but one side—but one phase. Hence he said with Timothy, 2 Cor. 1 ; 18, "But as God is true, our word toward you *was not yea and nay*." He could see no space between truth and error, where he might labor, and so be on neither side. He always believed *something*, and never was afraid to declare what he did believe. I feel confident, that if he were alive now, he would have such a sense of fidelity to his fellow creatures, and especially to his Lord and Master, that he would be willing to be made again "as the filth of the world," and as "the offscouring of all things," rather than to be puzzling his brethren to know what he really believed ; or to state his sentiments, on the vital subjects of the Christian religion, in such a manner, as to be understood more than one way.

It was a maxim among the orthodox in the early life of the writer, and



one which he knows not how to abandon, that those who really believe in the distinguishing doctrines of the Bible, love to state them clearly ; and that they are conscientiously opposed to ambiguity and concealment. This he must believe still, if Paul is a true representative of orthodoxy. They have not been wont to do what looks like throwing out feelers to ascertain the pulsation of the public mind, before putting their conjectures into a settled belief. Indeed, they believe that an "open bold front always ends best." There have doubtless been anti-Calvinists who were frank ; but to find a real Calvinist not so, would, in former days, have been deemed impossible.

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## LETTER XVI.

JEREMIAH, 32 ; 17,—“AH, LORD GOD ! BEHOLD THOU HAST MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH BY THY GREAT POWER AND STRETCHED-OUT ARM, AND THERE IS NOTHING TOO HARD FOR THEE.”—Verse 27.—“BEHOLD, I AM THE LORD, THE GOD OF ALL FLESH : IS THERE ANY THING TOO HARD FOR ME ?” It is evident that in this last verse, Jehovah responded to what Jeremiah had said, and confirmed his declaration, “there is nothing too hard for thee.” Ps. 78 ; 41.—“YEA, THEY TURNED BACK, AND TEMPTED GOD, AND LIMITED THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL.”

It is entirely out of place, and dangerous for us to undertake to limit the power of God, except in cases in which he has expressly limited himself in his word. Here, as on all other religious subjects, his word is our perfect rule ; and if we do not confine all our sentiments, entirely within the limits it prescribes, we are like the ship that has broken away from its moorings, is driven out of the harbor, and gone without compass or rudder, no one knows where.

The Bible shows us, that God has been pleased to limit himself in two respects, and in no other as I can find. First, he cannot look upon iniquity ; he cannot lie, or do wrong in any thing. “In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised before the world began.” “That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie.” Secondly, God has limited himself to accomplish what he has purposed. “He cannot deny himself.” Thus he determined to save Lot, when Sodom was destroyed. Accordingly he said to him, “Haste thee, escape thither : for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither.” When it is said, (Mark 6 ; 5,) that “he could there do no mighty works, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them,” it is evident, that his inability arose from the fact, that he determined the sick

should come, or be brought to him, in order to be healed ; or he should in some way be applied to ; and in as much as the people had not faith enough to do thus, he of course could not heal them. These ways, in which Jehovah is pleased to limit himself, are of course perfectly voluntary on his part ; and so far from exhibiting the least incompetency in him, are the glory of his character. Who does not instantly perceive, that such a *cannot* in God is essentially different from that which is said to originate from the “ nature of things,” or from any laws which are not entirely under his control ? As the scriptures are silent as to any inability in God, except what is wholly voluntary, while they are so full of the doctrine of his perfect ability to do every thing he pleases, I think we are bound to understand such silence as the strongest attestation to his perfect competency, and of the entire falsity and audacity of all philosophical schemes or hints, however remote, which will not be subject to these teachings of the Bible. As surely as I believe there is a God, and that the scriptures are his word, so surely do I believe that he intended to make a full, sufficient revelation of himself in respect to his ability or inability ; and that there cannot be any thing more out of place, than for us to pretend that we can know more about him than his word teaches, and that by the wonderful march of our minds we can discover in him that which his word has entirely overlooked. Hence it is far from being a *pleasant* duty to call the attention of the reader to the following sentences in a letter from Professor Goodrich, dated Nov. 30, 1848.—“ Who will pretend that in order to assert the independence of God, or establish his almighty power, we must represent him as literally able to *do every* thing supposable, to dispense with a part of his attributes, or withdraw his boundless presence within the limits of a finite existence ? While he remains the being that he is, he must act according to the laws of his own nature.” (Is it to be presumed that we know all the laws of God’s nature ?) “ The same is equally true, when he acts upon other beings. If they are to remain the beings they are, he must operate on *them* in accordance with *their* nature. To affirm this in one case, is no more the limitation of his power, than to affirm it in the other. The truth is, the question of power has no relevance whatever to any such cases. Who would hesitate to say, that God cannot make a *stone think* ? He may destroy it and put a thinking being in its place ; but while it remains a stone it cannot possess the properties of thought. So, too, in respect to man, who has a nature, or constitution of mind, which makes him a moral agent. God, in operating upon him, must act in accordance to that nature, and the essential laws of moral agency. The moment these are encroached on, he ceases to be a man, and is changed into a different being.”

In this quotation from Professor Goodrich, we perceive he takes it for granted, that no one believes God can make a *stone think* ; and the reason is, because he cannot act upon any being or thing, contrary to the nature of such being or thing ; and as a stone is not a thinking being, God cannot make it think, without changing its nature. If this is correct reasoning, I ask, how then came the Lord Jesus Christ to tell the unbelieving Pharisees, (Luke 19 ; 37-40) " If these should hold their peace the stones would immediately cry out ? " Now it is as contrary to the nature of a stone to cry out, as to think. Indeed, crying out implies thought. Would the Saviour use such language to the caviling Pharisees, if God was unable to do what he suggested ? Who will dare say that he would ? Let him say it, then, if he dares.

Again. *It is not true*, that God cannot operate on a being only in conformity to the laws of its nature. It is as contrary to the nature of an ass to speak with a man's voice, as it is for a stone to think. Yet Balaam's ass, though dumb, *did* speak with man's voice, and forbade the madness of the prophet. (2 Pet. 2 ; 16.) Neither was this animal changed into another being, when he reproved his master ; for the Lord made him say, " Am not I thine ass upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day ? " The language was not, " have I not been thine ass, and shall I not be again, after I have spoken with a man's voice." But the present tense is so used, that we must believe this animal was as really an ass while he was reproving his rider, as before or afterwards.

I believe, therefore, that sentiments such as I have quoted from Dr. Goodrich, and which are maintained by others, are calculated to *destroy all faith in miracles*. Said a man of such speculation, " As it is essential to the nature of the sun to give light, I cannot conceive that it could be the sun without shedding light." He was completely silenced by the reply, that when Jesus Christ was dying, there was darkness over all the land for three hours ; and we know it was not what we call an eclipse of the sun, it being about the full of the moon. All real believers in miracles, as far as I know, are unanimous in the opinion, that this darkness was a miracle. But if it is the nature of the sun to give light, and if God must operate upon it according to its nature, then he cannot put out its light, unless he changes it into something else. On this principle *he could not work that miracle*.

As another illustration, we will notice the miracle at the Red Sea, when its waters were divided, till all the Israelites passed through its bed on dry ground. It is according to the nature of water, we all know, to seek a level the instant it is disturbed ; and that it is totally contrary to its nature " to stand as a heap." Yet we are informed, Ps. 78 ; 13,

that this was the case, and that he, (God,) made "the waters" to do so. But Dr. Goodrich tells us, that when God acts upon other beings, (than himself,) "he must operate on *them*, in accordance with *their* nature." Dr. Goodrich's principles then, render it impossible even for God, to do what the scriptures declare was done, when the Israelites went through the Red sea, when they passed through Jordan forty years afterward, and when Elijah went through the same river, on the day he was carried to heaven in a chariot of fire.

Take yet another illustration. We all know, that it is the nature of fire to destroy the bodies of men ; and that it is impossible for them, without a miracle, to withstand the heat of a furnace. Yet Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego did withstand the violence of Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, though it was heated seven times hotter than common. When they came out, the "princes, governors, captains, and the king's counselors being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was a hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them." To show how great this wonder was, we are informed, that "the flame of the fire slew those men that took up Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego." It seems they were burned to death, by coming near enough to the furnace to cast in these three Jews. The nature of the fire, therefore, was not changed. Neither did these men become salamanders, when in this intense heat ; for the king declared, that he saw "four men loose, (one more than was put in !) walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt ; and the form of the fourth was like the Son of God." What now becomes of Dr. Goodrich's declaration, "that when he (God) operates upon other beings, if they remain the beings they are, he must operate on *them* in accordance with *their* nature ?" In Webster's dictionary I find a miracle to be precisely what I was taught in my youth, "an event, or effect contrary to the established constitution of things, or deviation from the known laws of nature. Miracles can be wrought only by almighty power." But Dr. Goodrich says, not only, "that when he (God) operates upon other beings, if they remain the beings they are, he must operate on *them* in accordance with *their* nature ;" but he says "the truth is, the question of power has no relevance to any such cases." Nothing can be plainer than that Dr. Goodrich's speculations annihilate all miracles. Hence faithfulness to him, whose miracles I have long felt bound to defend, teaches me the painful duty of declaring that such speculations as Dr. Goodrich has put forth, appear to me to be no better than a preparatory school to open infidelity. I believe that already, in some parts of New England, there is such a mixture of New Haven speculations, Unitarianism, Swedenborgianism,



Transcendentalism, Garrisonism, &c., that the minds of many are greatly confused concerning the truth of divine Revelation ; and things seem to be ripening for the application of the Saviour's question, "When the Son of man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?"

Whatever may be the particular object or objects of those who are sending their metaphysical schemes over the country, and are trying experiments to see how rapid the march of mind can be, who can doubt that Satan also has *his* plan ? He must be gratified with the first lesson toward apostacy, which is, to have obscurity and doubt spread over the religious hemisphere. To see first principles called in question and unsettled. This is the common and direct route to heresies, infidelity and universal skepticism, or the history of past ages has deceived me. The old Gamester has been hustling things together for more than a quarter of a century, to prepare for the great question again, concerning the sufficiency of human reason, though in a more subtle manner than formerly. Formerly, infidelity assumed, that human reason supercedes the necessity of a divine revelation. Modern speculations claim, that though there is a necessity for a divine revelation, it is within the province of reason to decide, what that revelation must be. To such yielding to the sufficiency of human reason, Satan and all his hosts will say, Amen. When I perceive the fondness of some to expose their extreme ignorance of our infinite God, I would that each of them might feel as Job did, when the Lord said to him in the midst of a terrific whirlwind, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth ? DECLARE IF THOU HAST UNDERSTANDING." By such a discipline our modern knowing ones might be led to say as Job did at that time, "Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes."

According to Dr. Goodrich, Jehovah must act upon material things, according to the nature of material things ; and he must act upon mind according to the essential laws of mind or moral agency. We will now turn our attention to this limitation of Jehovah in relation to moral agency. How then are moral agents governed ? According to New Divinity, if governed at all, they must be governed by whatever influences bear upon their minds to persuade them. Such influences, I believe, are summed up in motives. As the mind is governed by motives, it is said that moral influence consists in presenting motives to the mind in the most convincing manner. *It is eloquence.* Thus, one of this way of thinking has said, that if he had the eloquence of the Holy Spirit, he could convert sinners as well as the Spirit !

Let us now see how this doctrine will apply to the authority of Christ over the fallen spirits, and to that authority over them, which he has delegated to his people. No one I believe will doubt, that these fallen

spirits are moral agents. According to New Divinity it must have been simply eloquence, the art of persuasion, by which Christ and his disciples cast out devils. This is the only way in which even God can gain influence over them, according to Dr. Goodrich. He does not consider the question of power to have any relevance to such cases. It is said, "that power cannot apply to mind, any more than motive to matter." In Mat. 8, it appears that two men possessed with devils met the Saviour—that the evil spirits "cried out," and said, "art thou come to torment us before the time?" And they "besought him, saying, if thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine." It seems as though the devils were very reluctant to leave the men, but they expected to be cast out. They were not yet persuaded to go, but they expected they must be persuaded, according to New Divinity, simply by the eloquence of Christ. They were in trouble, lest they should be *persuaded* to depart; and as though they expected to be persuaded in spite of themselves, they chose to be sent into the swine. *If thou cast us out.* This is rather unusual language, when according to New Divinity, nothing more was intended, than persuading them to leave the two men who were possessed. It sounds a little like power though applied to mind. Probably the devils did not understand the language of moral philosophy of religion. We read, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." On the New Divinity principle, there can be no way to resist him but by our eloquence; and by his fleeing from us, nothing more is intended than that we persuade him to believe he had better go off in a hurry.

In the case of an angel whom John saw come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand; the improvements in theological science teach us, that he will lay hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is called the devil and Satan, and will bind him, will cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, and keep him there a thousand years—*all by moral suasion.*

If a man would not render himself ridiculous, he had better be a little cautious about limiting the Almighty, in order to show how much he knows himself. And what if some should come clear down to Jeremiah's modesty and respectfulness of God, when he said in prayer to him, "There is nothing too hard for thee;" instead of assuming to be the umpires of the universe, and asserting what God can do, and what he cannot do in relation to what he would do if he could; what is his duty to do, what is impossible in the nature of things for him to do, so that to suppose he could do so and so, would be a contradiction of terms, the same as to suppose that two and two are not four? The prophet, it

seems, has given the highest idea we can conceive of the independence and almighty power of God. I can hardly believe that Jeremiah had adopted Dr. Goodrich's philosophy, when he said, "nothing is too hard for thee."

I have mentioned in my fourteenth Letter, that though Dr. Goodrich stated that he had answered every argument in my printed Letter to the Professors, he did not attempt to explain five passages of scripture, which I presented together as proof of Jehovah's supreme independence. I really thought, that there was something like argument here for Dr. Goodrich to answer, if he could, and I think so still. The passages are these. "But our God is in the heavens; he hath done whatsoever he pleased." "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, in earth, in the sea and all deep places." "And he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou?" "Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." "In whom we also have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him, who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

If Dr. Goodrich had not withdrawn all intercourse with me in relation to the subjects of debate, I should really love to have him explain these texts. And if he should do it, I should want that he should explain many more of the same class. And even if he should do all this, in conformity to his philosophy, I should have one more text still for his consideration, Isa. 8; 21. "To the law and the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

Though I must not attempt to communicate any more with Dr. Goodrich, yet I hope he will learn in some indirect way, that up to the present time, (Nov. 1850,) I have as much respect for the plain declarations of God's word as for his philosophy, and a little more. The five texts just quoted, are far from being the only ones with which I vindicated my sentiments in my printed letter, against those of the theological Professors, and of which Dr. Goodrich has taken no notice, though he says he has answered every argument in that book. But let us look at this a moment. Among the numerous texts which I advanced to prove the perfectly independent supremacy of God, there was one which Dr. Goodrich contended did not apply. He labored hard to prove that it was not to my purpose. It seems then, that he found as he thought an argument *against* my views in this one passage. But he sees no argument *in my favor*, from those five passages which I quoted together, and from various others; for he is silent as death in relation to them—he

dares not grapple with them, and yet pretends there is no argument in them. In all this, Dr. Goodrich convinces me that his hold upon the word of God is very slender whenever it comes in contact with his preconceived notions—with that philosophy which is back of his theology," so slender as to shock and alarm every consistent believer in the scriptures as the infallible rule of faith. In former times quotations from the Bible were treated with great respect. They were supposed to mean something; yea, if not more than one text was pertinently adduced, its authority was considered paramount to all the schemes and reasonings of men. But now *five passages* taken from different parts of the word of God mean nothing in Dr. Goodrich's estimation, or at least so little, as to be beneath notice. On the same principle, fifty or five hundred texts may be passed over as unworthy of consideration. And it should be added, according to the plan of himself and colleagues, the opinion of one is the opinion of the whole. This is clear from the fact, that Dr. Goodrich makes no objection to the following declaration, in my published Letter to the Professors, pages 50 and 51. "By setting your names as you have, I consider that you have endorsed for each other, and that your peculiarities, whether subject to praise or censure, are to be viewed as joint stock." Such glaring disregard of the authority of God's word, if not contempt cast upon it, is enough to make every real believer in the Bible, who is not a coward, protest against it. This I do, though my effort be as feeble as "Priam's dart," I protest against such disregard of the word of God, as one of the ingredients of a skeptical, slippery, hordwinking, scripture-repudiating, awfully irreverent theology. A theology, which attempts to shun the cross of true submission to the will of God, and hopes to ride to heaven on 'Dr. Taylor's supposition.' (See Letter VIII.) It is a theology, which I expect soon to show sets aside a large class of texts, containing the essential and glorious doctrine of *power applied to mind*, in the conversion and sanctification of men; and has the audacity to invent a regeneration, because forsooth the regeneration which the Lord Jesus Christ preached, cannot keep pace with the thundering "march of mind" in these days. Yes, these are days of the terrific tread of "giant" mind, when divine truth must either fall into the rear, or stand out of the way, or be crushed.



## LETTER XVII.

MATTHEW, 22; 29.—“YE DO ERR, NOT KNOWING THE SCRIPTURES NOR THE POWER OF GOD.”

NOTHING detects error like the sacred scriptures. No wonder that errorists shun or pervert them. Indeed this is one of the great objects for which God has been pleased to give them to us: and only let them speak their own language, unshackled by vain philosophy, or interested criticisms and special pleadings, and they will conduct us to the haven of truth. I never knew but one way to study and teach them. We must approach them as God's word, and compare them together, to ascertain their general import, the design and scope of the writers, and how words and phrases are to be used. This is the way children are taught, or should be, in Sabbath Schools; and the higher schools in Christian theology should simply carry out this mode of studying them. There is no new philosophy to learn—no new lexicon to study—no uncommon use of language. The scriptures were designed for all classes of people; for the illiterate as well as for the learned; and with honest hearts, “wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.” This is a summary view of that method of studying and teaching the Bible, in which I have been established; and if I am yet a novice on the subject, I am one in my grey hairs, and expect to remain so till “I quit this mortal stage.”

But one of the Newtons in the improvements of theological science has made the wonderful discovery, as I have learned in a letter, an extract of which is now before me, that “We all have a philosophy back of our theology.” This must mean, that our philosophy is the center or starting place of truth in us, to which our knowledge of theology from all other sources must submit; and it must of course be the final umpire to decide between truth and error, right and wrong. This is one form of infidelity. Not that form, however, which rejects the authority of the Bible from the first. So far from it, it professes to believe in and to vindicate the truth of the sacred writings. It decides not against them, either as a whole, or in part, except as they occasionally come in contact with the previously formed notions of philosophy. Then this philosophy, which is only another name for reason, assumes its authority over every other consideration. This is the most dangerous form of infidelity, because the most subtle and unsuspected. The

fruits of it may be seen in the efforts made so to change the use of language as to reconcile the Bible to this philosophy, which is said to be *back of theology* in mankind.

I would remark in this place, that when I speak of theologians' acting, in certain cases, on infidel principles, I do not intend to be understood as deciding against their piety, for it is entirely unknown to me how far good men may be deluded. But while I gladly plead ignorance on this point, it is my determination to call things by their right names according to my understanding of them. I hold to definitions myself, and intend to hold others to them.

The idea of power in God over his moral creation has been very afflicting to some theologians. They have thought that such an idea is inconsistent with free agency. This, I presume, is the reason why Dr. Goodrich and others have insisted that power cannot apply to mind. This idea is so contrary to the scriptures, that when it was first circulated, I thought it impossible for any to believe it, who had ever been established in the faith. Power was defined to be physical force; and that such as applied it to religion were guilty of pretending that God drew sinners up to heaven against their wills, &c. But a little attention to what the scriptures declare on this subject will show how false is the wisdom of man. Matthew, 10; 1.—“And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them *power* against unclean spirits to cast them out.” Luke, 9; 1.—“Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them *power* and authority *over* all devils.” It has already been noticed, that the fallen spirits are moral agents—all mind. Now since Christ gave his disciples *power against* them and *over* them, what becomes of the assertion, that the idea of *power* is not relevant in the case? These passages of scripture are sufficient to convince any one, who does not put philosophy above the word, that power is not necessarily physical force, and that it is applied to mind by the inspired writers, as well as to what is material.

Colossians, 1; 13,—“Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness.” Did it not require power to deliver these Colossians *from* power? Acts, 26; 18.—“To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the *power* of Satan unto God.” Ah! does Satan, then, a spiritual being—all mind, possess power? Yes: he is a powerful being, and to be dreaded on this account. Certainly, in this case, *power* is applied to mind.

Psalms, 109; 3.—“Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy *power*.” The power of God, therefore, so far from taking away free agency, and turning men into machines, as some pretend, is the *very* thing and the *only* thing which makes them *willing* to do what God

requires of them. And if those I am opposing are ever saved, it must be by the operation of that power which they deny. Power is applied to mind—to the will. There never was, and there never will be, an acceptable prayer offered to God for the conversion of sinners, which is not in accordance with this sentiment, vain philosophy to the contrary notwithstanding.

1 Corinthians, 2 ; 5.—“That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the *power* of God.” The faith of Christians does not stand upon the influence of men’s wisdom on the understanding, nor on physical force upon the body ; but upon the *power of God* upon the heart.”

2 Corinthians, 4 ; 7.—“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the *power* may be of God and not of us.” We are here taught, that it is power which gives success to the ministry of the word ; all success consisting of course in convicting, converting and sanctifying men—that this power is of God—that he takes special care to convince the world that it is power, and his own power, in distinction from, and above, all instrumentality, which gives saving efficacy to the word. And it is not only God’s power, but the *excellency* of power, as the inspired apostle thought. Now all the power in this text, as well as in those noticed before, and in those yet to be noticed, applies to mind.

Ephesians, 1 ; 19.—“And what is the exceeding greatness of his *power* to us ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty *power*.” This remarkable passage describes the glorious efficiency of God as producing in the Ephesians, all their elevated hopes of heaven ; and in point of greatness, the power which wrought in them, is compared to that which raised Jesus Christ from the dead. I say in point of greatness ; for it is admitted, that the glorious power which raised Christ from the dead was directed in part to what was corporeal. But it is mentioned as illustrative of an equally glorious efficiency called power, which was exerted on the hearts of the Ephesians, to raise them to spiritual life. This blessed efficiency of Jehovah in quickening the Ephesians from spiritual death, and in causing them to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, is not only called power, but the *exceeding greatness of power, and according to the working of his mighty power*. On this passage Scott very justly remarks : “It is remarkable that the apostle seems here studiously to have exhausted the utmost vigor of the Greek language, to express, by a beautiful accumulation of the most energetic words, the omnipotence of God as effecting the believer’s conversion, in continuing, as it were, that exercise of it by which the Redeemer was raised from the dead.” Thus far Scott. But the wonderful improvements in what some call theolog-

ical science, spurn the idea, not only of Omnipotence, but of *any* power from God in the work of conversion and sanctification. If there were no other passage of scripture to condemn all such schemes, their condemnation would be complete, and sealed forever.

Ephesians, 3 ; 7.—“Wherein I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me, by the effectual working of his *power*.” The apostle here evidently refers to his own conversion, with which every reader of the Bible is acquainted. Verse 20 : “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the *power* that worketh in us.” Paul here refers to the religious experience both of himself and the Ephesians. It was *power* working in them.

Ephesians, 6 ; 10.—“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the *power* of his might.” What sense could we find in this exhortation, if God did not work on the minds of believers by his power ? Equally unintelligible would, in this case, be the following instruction. Colossians, 1 ; 11 : “Strengthened with all might according to his glorious *power*, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.”

Romans, 15 ; 13.—“Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope through the *power* of the Holy Ghost.” Hope is an exercise of the heart of a free agent, and the *power* of the Holy Ghost gives it. Does this power destroy free agency, and turn Christians into machines ? Romans, 16 ; 25 : “Now to him that is of *power* to establish you according to my gospel.” Why does Paul speak of the power of God to establish Christians, if power is not applied to mind ? Can Christians be established in religion without their minds ?

2 Thessalonians, 1 ; 11.—“Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of his calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with *power*.” Here we are unequivocally taught, that the faith of believers is the effect of God’s power.

1 Peter, 1 ; 5.—“Who are kept by the *power* of God through faith unto salvation.” How ungrateful and ignorant we must be, if we deny that it is God’s power which keeps us from apostasy !

2 Peter, 1 ; 3.—“According as his divine *power* hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness.” The life here brought to view is spiritual and eternal life. Godliness means piety, holiness—such a character as God approves, a character which is made up of parts, such as repentance—love to God—faith in Christ—humility—submission—a delight in the cause of Christ, and in the observance of



all the institutions of his word—love to his people—love to the souls of all mankind—conscientiousness in all things—zeal—perseverance—patience—meekness—fornearance—watchfulness, and a course of living in all things and at all times, which proves that the soul is born of God, and an heir of glory. Indeed, every good thing which is found in the Christian, both in this life and in heaven, is the effect of God's power working in him.

More passages of scripture still might be adduced, to show the truth of the doctrine under consideration. But more have been already brought forward, than are sufficient to prove that power is not always physical force; and that it applies to mind, if the Bible is true: and the reason why so large a selection is made at this time is because Christians love to dwell upon the theme. They know that if God does not work in them by his *power*, they are undone forever. How it awakens their gratitude, faith, hope and religious joy, to think upon the infinite kindness of God, in working in them by his divine power both to will and to do, of his good pleasure.

How lamentable then, that men who profess to love and teach the word of God should boldly deny some of its plainest and sweetest truths, because they do not support a philosophy which claims no higher authority than human invention! Such a first stride is, in my opinion, greater and more daring, in one who professes to teach the Bible, than the next from it would be, to deny the authority of all that sacred book. If philosophy is daring enough to attack one plain doctrine of divine revelation, it is daring enough to attack another, and another, till what we have been wont to call a revelation from heaven, will possess no authority or interest above that of an old almanac.

I here feel it my duty to state some facts which came within my knowledge many years ago. At the time of the great revolution in France near the close of the last century, the corrupt principles of that nation became quite common in some parts of the country. In that portion of Massachusetts where I then resided, otherwise respectable families kept Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* among their daily reading books. Young people in their parties would sneer at the Bible as a false and useless book; and some, to make sport for the rest, would mock the sacrament of the Lord's supper. The ministers of Mendon Association became greatly alarmed at the prevalence and boldness of infidelity, and published a treatise on the *Necessity and Truth of Divine Revelation*. (The writers were said to be the Rev. Nathaniel Emmons, of Franklin, the Rev. Caleb Alexander, of Mendon, and the Rev. John Crane, of Northbridge.) Some of the freethinkers of those days were men of information, and acute reasoners. The

scenes I then witnessed are painfully fresh in my memory ; *and I can have no doubt*, that if those believers in Thomas Paine had learned the denial of God's power in the face of so large a class of texts as I have quoted in this letter ; if they had seen that paragraph which I quoted and endeavored to confute in my last letter ; if they had known the management of *the famous supposition* ; if they had understood how God must be treated in the improvements of theological science, as well as some other things which this series of Letters discloses, they would have set the whole down as the triumphs of infidelity, and would have chuckled at the mortification, which the sober believers in the Bible must have felt. Who will wonder, then, that I have been astonished and ashamed that old Puritan Connecticut, where it has been thought so much knowledge of the subtleties and curse of infidelity has existed, *will keep* some of the most reckless speculators at the head of their "school of the prophets," to qualify our choice young men to become—what ! Why to become champions in the defence of the Christian religion ! Set supposition-mongers to be the great advocates of God's eternal truth ; of that word of his which "is forever settled in heaven !" How can I believe that the Bible is safe in such hands ? *I cannot*, let who will find fault with me. And I say further, that the cause of Christianity in general, and of personal religion in particular, has suffered *immensely*, for the want of such plain dealing. I will not silently see my religion, my Bible, and my God betrayed by the miserable arts and wanton tricks of "fleshly wisdom." Shame on it !



## LETTER XVIII.

PROV. 30 ; 6.—"ADD THOU NOT UNTO HIS WORDS, LEST HE REPROVE THEE, AND THOU BE FOUND A LIAR."

FROM this passage and that which we find in Rev. 22 ; 18, 19, we are most solemnly warned to set ourselves as far removed as possible, from saying any thing, which may have the least appearance of adding to, or taking from, what God has revealed in his holy word. It is not enough, that our words do not expressly add to, or take from, what God has spoken. We should be extremely cautious to say nothing, which, by a necessary implication, or fair inference, may be understood to expose ourselves, in either respect, to Jehovah's awful censure.

Whoever reads the Bible with attention, may perceive, that all the leading doctrines of Divine Revelation, though brought to view in many places, are so expressed, as that some one passage or more, on each of these doctrines, is so clearly and comprehensively stated, as to form the center to which other passages on the same general subject, point. Thus in our meditations on the doctrine of the atonement, though brought to view in very many places, we turn our attention specially to Rom., latter part of the third chapter, where this glorious doctrine is more clearly, and comprehensively stated, than can be found in so few words any where else in the Bible. The two most important places, where the doctrine of Justification by Faith is discussed, are the fourth chapter of Romans, and the third of Galatians. In the eleventh chapter of Paul's epistle to the Hebrews, there is a more important description given of the power of Faith as a christian grace, than can be found in any other place in the Bible. Though so much is said about love in various places, the thirteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, gives the most extraordinary description of it by the term charity. As to the doctrine of Regeneration, though clearly brought to view in many places of the divine word, yet it is more definitely stated in the third chapter of the gospel according to John, and first twelve verses, than any where else in the sacred scriptures. No doubt Nicodemus wished to receive the instructions of Christ ; but like many since, who have desired that others might not know, that they were inquirers, he came to Jesus by night. In his address to Christ he took pains to give him a fair opportunity to select what subject he pleased. Without any introduction, the Saviour entered upon the doctrine of Regeneration, giving it a free discussion, and answering the objections of Nicodemus. The impressions, therefore, which are instantly received by reading this discourse of Christ, are the *true* impressions ; and our mistakes on the subject must of course be studied, willful mistakes.

It is a painful duty, which, if I am not much mistaken, I owe the Christian public, to show the astonishing difference between the doctrine of Regeneration as stated by the Lord Jesus, and as stated by the Rev. Nathaniel W. Taylor, D. D., Professor of Didactic Theology in Yale College. In order to give the reader a fair view of the case, it is most convenient to place what the Saviour says, and what Dr. Taylor says, in opposite columns.

## JOHN, CHAPTER III.

“There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

2. The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles, that thou doest, except God be with him.

3. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

4. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

5. Jesus answered, Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

6. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

7. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

8. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.

9. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?

10. Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?

11. Verily, verily I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.

12. If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?”

The reader of the Bible cannot fail to perceive that the other passages which bring to view the doctrine of Regeneration, agree with the above representation of Christ. Take for examples John 1; 13. Titus 3; 5. James 1; 18.

## DR. TAYLOR.

“Let the sinner then as a being who loves happiness, and desires the highest degree of it, under the influence of such desire, take into solemn consideration the question, whether the highest happiness is to be found in God or the world; let him pursue this inquiry, if need be, till it results in the conviction that such happiness is to be found in God only; and let him follow up this conviction with that intent and engrossing contemplation of the realities which truth discloses, and with that stirring up of his sensibilities in view of them, which invest the world, when considered as his only portion, with an aspect of insignificance, gloom and even terror, and which shall chill and suspend the present love of it; and let the contemplation be persevered in, till it shall discover a reality and excellence in the objects of holy affection, which shall put him upon direct and desperate efforts to fix his heart upon them; and let this process of thought, of effort, and of action be entered upon as the one that is never to be abandoned, until the end proposed by it be accomplished—until the only living and true God is loved and chosen as his God forever; and we say, that in this way the work of regeneration, through grace, may be accomplished.”—*Christian Spectator*, 1829, p. p. 32, 33.



Who does not perceive, instantly, in reading these two columns, that in point of sentiment they bear no resemblance to each other? The Saviour's account of Regeneration ascribes the work exclusively to God. Dr. Taylor proposes that man should do it, and shows us how! It is true, that at the close of the paragraph he speaks of grace; but he does not inform us where it comes in, or what it does. Consequently we are left to the conclusion, that there is no more grace in the means of Regeneration, as it is called, than in our transactions about the common business of life. But even this is not the most startling feature in this shocking paragraph. Regeneration is the change from the state of nature to the state of grace; and is believed, by all Calvinists, to be an instantaneous work. Or, according to the scriptures, it is more proper to say, it belongs to no time. Our Saviour declares, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." It is perfectly clear, therefore, that there is no time to be calculated upon, when a person is not either in a converted state, or unconverted state; when he is not either in a state of nature, or a state of grace; when he is not born of the flesh, or born of the Spirit. The exercises of the heart are quick as thought; and there is no conceivable space of time between them. The last exercise of the impenitent sinner is a sinful exercise, and the first exercise of the penitent is a holy exercise. In his last impenitent exercise he was *against* Christ; but in his first penitent exercise he is *for* him. This is the meaning of the Saviour in the passage quoted. He has left no possible time for us to fill up by what some call "the means of Regeneration." All such notions are entirely out of book. God has revealed nothing on the subject. He has left no space for men to build theories upon; and it is as completely the invention of men, as the doctrine of purgatory. How strange, how lamentable, that such a view of Regeneration as is found on the right hand column, should ever have been laid before our eyes, as truth to be believed! Totally disregarding the plain declarations of Christ, "He that is not for me is against me," the author pretends that there is an intermediate state, sufficient for a process of several mental changes, and to "*be persevered in.*" Indeed, one is left to the conjecture, that a long time must elapse for the sinner to perform, what, if Christ speaks the truth, belongs to *no* time. And *after* this perseverance to discover, that happiness is to be found in God, rather than in the world; after following up this conviction by an intense "contemplation of the realities which truth discloses;" after "stirring up his sensibilities in view of them;" after he has so exerted himself as to suspend his selfish principle; then he must put himself "upon *direct and desperate efforts* to fix his heart upon"—"the objects of holy affection,"

which he had previously discovered ; and he must *now* “let this process of thought, of effort, and of action, be entered upon as the one never to be abandoned.” If this is not adding to the word of God, what can be ? There is no doctrine of Revelation more fully and circumstantially stated and explained, than the doctrine of Regeneration by the Holy Spirit. The creeds of all evangelical denominations, make Regeneration a part of the official work of the Holy Ghost. For this, as well as for the succeeding sanctification of believers, this gracious Agent has been sent into the world as the fruit of the Saviour’s death. Hence all this talk about sinners converting themselves, seems to me like a pretense that man can take the official work of the Holy Ghost out of his hands, and put him entirely on the back-ground. Indeed it is a declaration that he is not needed, if man will only do his duty. How such sentiments look, beside the long quotation in John already made, and beside the following scripture. “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God !” How is it possible, that any one who has experienced a change of heart by the Holy Spirit, can trifle with it to such a degree ?

It is an interesting question, what has induced any Christians to take such ground ? The correct answer, I believe is this : Some adopt it as an invariable maxim, that we are *naturally* able to do whatever God requires of us. In other words, natural ability and obligation always go together. Hence it is said, that it is a charge against the goodness of God to pretend that he ever requires any one to do what he has no natural ability to accomplish. Therefore he must have natural ability to become holy. I can but notice in this, the immensely evil consequences of adopting maxims on religious subjects independently of the Bible. One entertains the notion that something must be true, or false, as the case may be ; and, therefore, he does not even think of what the scriptures say on the subject. But how different would be the result, if he had suspended his judgment till he had been sure of finding what God says in his word. Ex. 8 ; 5. “And the Lord spake unto Moses, say unto Aaron, stretch forth thine hand with thy rod over the streams, over the rivers, and over the ponds, and cause frogs to come up upon the land of Egypt.” Now Aaron had no more natural ability to cause frogs to come up, than we have. Yet God commanded him to do it. But is not God a good Being ? Ex. 14 ; 16. Here the Lord commanded Moses, “But lift thou up thy rod and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it.” Reader, what natural ability had Moses more than you to divide the sea ? Math. 10 ; 8. Christ commanded his disciples, “Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils.” Had the disciples any natural power to do these things ? Now any one of these

three cases is sufficient to destroy the maxim, that natural ability and obligation must always go together. We have, therefore, no right to conclude for certainty, that we have natural ability to become holy, because God requires us to be holy. Will it here be said, that Aaron, and Moses, and the disciples, had a right to believe, from what God had previously said, that he would enable them to perform the miracles which he had commanded them to perform? True. And all have a right to believe that God, by his grace, will enable them to become holy, by what he has said to them. Luke 11; 13. "If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." Deu. 4; 29. "If from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, then thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul." Ps. 104; 4. "Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face evermore." Now the fact, that God allows and requires all to seek his aid for spiritual good, (as he often does in his word,) is a demonstration, that there is some inability in us in relation to the attainment of such good; especially as he expressly requires us to inquire of him to do these things for us. See Eze. 36; 25-37.

Again. That there is obligation where there is not ability, is evident in cases in which men wickedly destroy their ability, and such cases are very numerous in this depraved world. No one finds fault with our statutes, which make a man responsible for the injurious acts he commits in a state of insanity, if it can be proved that his insanity is occasioned by drunkenness. Here obligation outlives ability. The same is true in all cases, where men put their property out of their hands to cheat their creditors. No matter how fraudulent the debtor may be. No matter how many widows and fatherless he has made beggars. He had all they were worth in his hands. But he wanted to live on their earnings himself; so he contrived to put all he held into the hands of one like himself, and in such a way as effectually to debar his creditors from receiving their due; and now according to the doctrine I am opposing, his obligation has ceased with his ability, and of course he is as honest as those whom he has cheated out of all they possessed.

The scriptural account of the punishment of the wicked in the future world, clearly proves that obligation remains after all ability is done. Math. 25. The direction concerning him who did not improve his one talent, is in these words,—verses 28-30. "Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness; there shall be

weeping and gnashing of teeth." At the commencement of this parable it is said that the man gave to one of his servants "five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability." Now when the talent was taken away from the man who had the one talent, his ability was taken away; and yet he is punished, by being put into outer darkness. If his obligation ceased with his ability, his punishment would be unjust. So it will be in relation to the punishment of all the wicked in the future world, if their obligations cease when their ability ceases.

Reader, as strange as it may seem, if you will but carefully examine, you will find it true, that some of the most exceptionable things in New Divinity are put forth on this groundless anti-scriptural assumption, that ability and obligation always go together. It is on this assumption, that no one can be a free agent, unless he has the power of contrary choice to the extent that he can regenerate himself. "Moral agents can do wrong, (and of course can do right,) under all possible preventing influence." It is further said, that "no one can prove but that what may be, will be." Now in order to carry out this baseless scheme, Dr. Taylor has found it necessary to add, from his own authority, what he calls "the means of regeneration;" and has attempted to throw on to man the work, which Christ has solemnly declared, with his own lips, belongs to the Holy Spirit. If such be the result of studying the nature of free agency, I pray that all may be content hereafter to learn what it is, simply by their own consciousness; and I have no doubt that it can be understood in this way, for all practical purposes, far better than any philosopher can teach it with his rules.

The reader will further recollect, that New Divinity makes the free agency of man more unlimited than the free agency of God. "Moral agents," by whom it seems creatures are exclusively intended, "can do wrong under all possible preventing influence." Not so with God. 'He *cannot* look upon iniquity.' "It is impossible for God to lie." What shall New Divinity do in this dilemma? Its only subterfuge seems to be that we *must not argue from the infinite to the finite*. What! are not the essential principles of moral agency the same in all moral agents? This suggestion is just as wise as it would be to pretend that we must not argue from the infinite to the finite respecting the nature of understanding, or of any other mental faculty, which is universally acknowledged to be common to both God and man.

The credence, which the speculations of the New Haven Professors have gained, in the country, is a remarkable instance of the influence of human authority. If such speculations had been put forth at first by strangers, in some remote place, I believe the authors of them would



have been considered so wildly erratic, as to be the objects of pity, rather than of commendation, by a Bible-reading community. But the Theological Professors at New Haven came into office in circumstances the most favorable to gain the confidence of the Christian public. There had been many years of remarkable peace and prosperity in our Zion. The Professors were introduced into office by those, who had long enjoyed public confidence. There was no *general* suspicion, if any, that the newly appointed Professors were dissatisfied with what was then known to be the orthodoxy of Connecticut. It was taken for granted, that they would contemplate no improvements in theology, but such as could be made by *studying the Bible*, and not speculative philosophy. No one dreamed, that they would resort to the framing of such hypothetical schemes, as would call in question that unlimitedness in God, in which the ministers and churches in the state had most certainly believed, and which, the Confession of Faith, so readily signed by the Professors, holds forth in the most plain and forcible language. Under these peculiar circumstances it might not be very strange, that *some* few men, of a peculiar temperament, should be thrown off their guard for a season, and experience a struggle in their minds before they could give up all the fascinations of worldly wisdom, so congenial to the proud heart. But it was not to be expected that so many professedly Bible students would suffer themselves to become the proselytes and advocates of the most extravagant and daring things to be found in the Professors' speculations. If my memory serves me, I have seen in print, attempts to advocate the denial of God's power, which the scriptures make so essential to the conversion and sanctification of man. If my memory serves me, I have seen that horrible caricature, rather mockery, of the sacred doctrine of regeneration, advocated in print, with the unscrupulous boldness of adding to God's holy words. If I were caught in this snare of human authority, and could not break it, I know not how I could blame the Roman Catholics for their servile adherence to the priests. What a curious effect, also, such man-worship has upon those to whom it is paid! In my correspondence with Dr. Goodrich, I stated my views of the scriptures on certain points, which differed from his. He attempted to reply to them, and one of his objections was, that I differed, as he thought, from all others on the subject. As Dr. Goodrich seems to think that *I* must not hazard an opinion without human authority to support it, how came *he* to set up his hypothetical schemes as the standard of truth, before the public knew what they were? If we must know what others will think of our views before we proclaim them, we must wait forever. But Dr. Goodrich probably thought, that in *his* circumstances, others would believe in him, advance what he might, though

an obscure pastor must hazard no opinion, which public sentiment has not already sanctioned. If, with the word of God in my hands, the question must be, whether others must think for me, or whether I shall think for myself, I must take the latter course, if I stand alone. If the old question of Protestantism, which I had thought was long ago settled, must come up again, "Whether the scriptures are the only and sufficient rule of faith and practice," I must decide in the affirmative, if I stand alone. Hence if the question be, which is the highest authority, the Bible, or the hypothetical speculations of men; I must say, the Bible, if I stand alone. If the question be, whether the fundamental doctrines of God's word are to be received as positive truths, or whether they must be modified, and softened, and made doubtful by suppositions, I must declare for positive truth, if I stand alone. My mind cannot thrive by living on suppositions, any better than on other kinds of fiction. If the question be, whether I shall be satisfied with the doctrine of regeneration as the Lord Jesus Christ taught it, or whether I shall adopt the new one, made by Dr. Taylor, and recommended by himself and others, I shall believe in the Saviour's regeneration, if I stand alone; for if I cherish the one of modern date, made by man, I fear I shall be reprov'd by my righteous Judge and found to be a liar by adding to his words. The Mormons have as good authority for their new Bible as Dr. Taylor has for his doctrine of self regeneration; and in publishing it, they are as respectful to the Lord of heaven and earth. I consider the contrivance and advocacy of such schemes to be absolute contempt cast upon the word of life, and a disgrace to the whole Protestant world. Jer. 8; 9. "Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?"

O how safe and honorable it would be for those who indulge in unscriptural speculations, to retract them according to gospel rules, with all the reasonings and conclusions contained in them. How this course would destroy enmity, disarm prejudice, and restore confidence and brotherly love! And what is a higher consideration still,—it would leave that testimony for God which he ever claims, and which we must all give, willingly or unwillingly, at the day of judgment.

## L E T T E R   X I X .

1 TIM. 5; 21.—“I CHARGE THEE BEFORE GOD AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THE ELECT ANGELS, THAT THOU OBSERVE THESE THINGS, WITHOUT PREFERRING ONE BEFORE ANOTHER, DOING NOTHING BY PARTIALITY.”

THE way to be useful in any sphere is to be impartial in our treatment of all our fellow creatures. If we do thus, they will know it, and it will be to our advantage and influence. On the other hand, if we are partial in our way, “preferring one before another,” it will all eventually be to our disadvantage. But as ministers of the gospel are public characters, who have dealings with all classes of people, on the most delicate subjects, and in the various circumstances of life, partiality in them detracts exceedingly from their usefulness, and exposes them to have their good “evil spoken of.” Most ministers know something about this by sad experience; and every person may understand, that partiality in ministers must be avoided as much as possible, from the fact, that they have so solemn a charge on the subject, from the inspired apostle.

But I believe it will be generally conceded, that the charge against partiality in ministers, is not limited to those to whom they preach; but that their obligation to be impartial extends to one another, in all their various relations. As on the one hand, they are bound to sympathize with, and help one another in their troubles; so on the other hand, they ought to be faithful to those of their brethren who may go out of the way. But is it not true, that they sometimes find the temptation to partiality very strong, when their erring brethren are of high standing, and of combined influence? That if for such reasons, public sentiment arrays itself against Christian fidelity, they are in danger of yielding to its dictates, and of setting their ingenuity to work to prove, that in *such a case*, duty and silence are the same thing?

I have been led to these reflections while considering how differently some faulty ministers have been treated from others, by their brethren. It is comparatively but a short time since the writings of the Rev. Horace Bushnell, D. D., of Hartford, have led his ministerial brethren to believe that he is unsound in the faith. After they had, as they thought, a fair opportunity to examine his sentiments, the Association of which he is a member, took such steps, as ecclesiastical usage demanded, to

call him to account for his errors: and this concern for the orthodoxy of ministers, it is believed, meets the approbation of the brotherhood throughout New England. This is as it should be. But how different has been the case in relation to the theological professors of Yale College. As long ago as 1828, their very objectionable scheme was broached; but so far from being called to account by the proper tribunals, or even of being subjected to any investigation, strictly speaking, they are supposed to be on an equal footing with those who conscientiously adhered to the Old School, if not even superior to them. Hence has sprung into use the cant of "Taylorism and Tylerism," as though the peculiarities of Dr. Taylor are not greater than those of Dr. Tyler; while Dr. Tyler has endeavored simply to sustain the Old Orthodoxy of Connecticut. This may, by some, be considered a trivial circumstance; but as small as it may seem, it has great power to mislead, and it is to be feared multitudes are deceived by it. It is a very convenient way to decide a cause, if we will not look into its merits. If there is no material difference between "Taylorism and Tylerism," then it is not materially different, whether he "who is over all, God blessed forever" is above control; or whether something controls him. Whether, though he is "blessed forever," "his blessedness is diminished by sin or not." Whether he is certainly sincere as a Lawgiver; or whether this is doubtful. Whether objections to the doctrines of grace are to be met by positive arguments, or only by hypothesis. Whether God as a free agent is on a par with man; or whether he is in this respect as much beneath man, as a child is beneath a giant. Whether there is such a thing as certainty in the moral universe; or whether every thing is uncertain. Whether we should believe in Old Divinity, which claims to be founded on the whole current of the scriptures; or in New Divinity, which makes no pretensions to be founded on scripture or fact, but merely upon a metaphysical notion. Whether we should treat "this glorious and fearful name, 'The Lord thy God,'" with marked reverence or with marked irreverence. Whether we should have any respect for the plain and numerous declarations of God's word, if they come in contact with our preconceived notions; or whether we may modify, and modify them till they become of too little consequence to be considered a reason against such notions. Whether we are satisfied with the Saviour's doctrine of Regeneration; or whether we may make a regeneration to suit our philosophy, and so *add to God's words*.

These specifications are only a specimen between the Old and New Divinity of New England. Other equally important points of difference are omitted.



After a hundred thousand dollars had been secured to Yale College, a part of which was applied to carry out the intention of its venerable founders, in establishing and endowing "a school of the prophets;" and after the Rev. Drs. Taylor, Goodrich, Fitch and Mr. Gibbs, had taken their professorships, what else was to be expected, than that as teachers of the Christian religion, they would make the Bible wholly their text book—that it should be the beginning, the middle, and the end of their professional studies and instructions. Their business was to bring all their own thoughts, and all the thoughts of their pupils, if possible, *to the obedience of Christ*; and surely no one can rationally expect this could be done, only by means of the word of Christ. The case was as plain as it was with Adam and Eve, as to what fruit they might, or might not eat, in the garden of Eden. The invariable rule is, (Jer. 23; 28,) "The prophet that hath a dream let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord." It was not to be expected, that as soon as these Professors were comfortably fixed in their several departments, they would put their wits upon the stretch, to collect materials from hypotheses; the nature of things; the power of contrary choice; that moral agents can do wrong under all possible preventing influence; no one can prove but that whatever may be, will be; you cannot prove the contrary; no created mind can tell, &c. &c. &c.: and by such means conjure up a Juggernaut of worldly wisdom, and send it rumbling, and squeaking, and whistling over the country, annoying and disgusting all the humble piety of Puritanism, and trampling upon the long acknowledged sufficiency of the word of God, and of its Almighty Author. I am not able to see, that the Professors had any more right to take the course they *did* take, than they would have to pretend to teach theology out of the Alcoran, or the Hindoo Shasters. And to crown the whole: after they had labored hard, for many years, in their printed writings, in their sermons, and in their exhortations to anxious inquirers, to show, that God had done all he could for their salvation, while they were remaining in impenitence; then these same Professors did, over their own signatures, in a printed document, jointly declare, "*We have never affirmed that God could not exclude sin from a moral universe.*"

This course of the Professors has been known for a long time; and yet no investigation of a strictly ecclesiastical nature has been made! Consequently they have been emboldened to act as though theirs was the right position, and that it should be sustained, as though "they are the people and wisdom shall die with them;" without regard to the feelings of their Old School brethren, or to the peace of Zion, or to the general current of the word of God. Such sentiments and such a

course should be checked by the authority which Christ has put into the hands of his people as a law of his kingdom. The four theological Professors at Yale College ought to render an account—for attempting to establish the inability of Jehovah in relation to what he would do if he could, while they have declared, as a part of their religious creed, that he is “infinite in power.” [Here their speculations contradict their creed. The declaration that “God is infinite in power,” has been well understood, by all who have signed the Orthodox creed, for two or three centuries. It means that God’s power is entirely unlimited by creatures, and entirely unlimited as to what he may prefer to do. All, therefore, who admit this expression into their creed, must be considered as bound by it, till they signify that they have altered their creed, and changed the expression which contains the doctrine of God’s power. In the “Statement and Remarks” of the Professors, published in 1835, they say in reference to their former “Statement,” “We cordially concurred in every sentiment expressed in the articles in the East Windsor Institute.” One of those articles declares in the language of the Westminster Catechism, “God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, *power*, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.” When, therefore, the Professors intimate the least inability in God, however slightly or indirectly, they contradict their own creed, and one of the fundamental principles of all religion. Here is the grand Deception-Nest of New Divinity. Here is the lurking hole, so lamentably overlooked, where the old serpent lies coiled, and is singing lullaby with his tale; and I believe his malice against God and his holy truth will be continually gratified, and Zion will mourn, till this Deception-Nest shall be effectually broken up. We may as well call a man healthy, who has a cancer at his vitals, as to call such deceptive theology sound and safe.]

The four theological Professors ought to give account—for so managing a supposition, as to render it doubtful whether God is sincere as a lawgiver, while they have declared, as a part of their religious creed, that he is infinite—in holiness and truth. [Why, then, did not the Professors rest the sincerity of God here, as a question forever settled, even by a double declaration? They say that God is infinite in holiness and truth. Then he is certainly sincere. Solemnly to declare, in an article of faith, before God and man, that God is infinite in holiness and truth, and afterward act as though the question of his sincerity were unsettled, IS AMAZING. Yet strange as it is, after the Professors had subscribed to this double testimony of Jehovah’s sincerity, they felt themselves authorized to resort to a mere supposition on this fundamental doctrine, in order to meet the objection, that sin is the

necessary means of the greatest good! And Dr. Goodrich informs us, as we have seen in the eighth Letter, "that the whole tenor of the word of God is against the theory of Hopkins;" Hopkins' theory containing the doctrine that sin in the necessary means of the greatest good. Why, then, did not the Professors bring the word of God to bear against this doctrine and annihilate it at once? Instead of it, they attempt to meet it by their supposition; and in so doing, they throw into doubt the very attribute of God, which they undertake to defend, and which their creed taught them is true without a supposition—is *positive-ly true*; and concerning which they were bound to express *no* doubt, so long as they should let their creed stand as the declaration of their faith. "For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness." Now it is impossible for the Professors to prove positively, that God is sincere as a Lawgiver, unless they give up their famous supposition, which they inform us they instituted for the express purpose of vindicating the divine sincerity. The snare in which they have caught themselves it is hoped will be a warning to all coming generations, not to resort to their own wisdom in stead of the word of God, for any purpose whatever. If they do, they will in some way or other, and some time or other see their folly.

The Professors ought to be called to an account, For denying that power applies to mind, contrary to a numerous class of texts. Whose word shall stand, God's or man's? See Jer. 44; 28.

The Professors ought to give account, For making and advocating another regeneration from that which Christ very definitely taught; and consequently for adding to God's word.

The Professors ought to give account For declaring conjointly in a published "statement," that they never had affirmed that God *could* not exclude sin from a moral universe, though they had long labored to show, that God had done all he could for the salvation of sinners, while they remained in impenitence.

Now, if such reckless, unscriptural speculations on some of the fundamental doctrines of all religion, and such an appearance of a most gross and public falsehood do not require an investigation, according to the authority which Christ has invested in his church, then I know not for what purpose church discipline was instituted.

I have it in writing, that one of the theological Professors maintains, that "a man may sincerely believe what he knows to be false." I must dissent from this as a general rule, notwithstanding it proceeds from so high authority; for we are authorized by the scriptures to confine this infernal faculty to those only, to whom God shall send strong delusion that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who be-

lieved not in the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." According to this doctrine, the most unreasonable jealousy, angry and malicious feelings that ever rankled in the human heart, may be turned into a *sincere belief*; and certainly every one has a right to declare and vindicate what he *sincerely believes*. How long could society exist; or rather, how soon would this world become like the infernal regions, if such a principle were put into practice! I take this to be metaphysical ethics, in distinction from the dictates of sober reason and common sense. And we ought to pray that such a principle may be forever confined to the walls of a mad house!



## LETTER XX.

1 COR. 1; 20, 21.—“WHERE IS THE WISE? WHERE IS THE SCRIBE? WHERE IS THE DISPUTER OF THIS WORLD? HATH NOT GOD MADE FOOLISH THE WISDOM OF THIS WORLD? FOR AFTER THAT IN THE WISDOM OF GOD, THE WORLD BY WISDOM KNEW NOT GOD, IT PLEASED GOD BY THE FOOLISHNESS OF PREACHING TO SAVE THEM THAT BELIEVE.”

WE are here taught, that the wisdom of this world, which of course comprehended the skill of the learned and acute Greeks, to a part of which nation these words were addressed, has no wisdom in it, in comparison with the revelation which God has made in his holy word. I proposed this subject on the twenty-seventh page of my printed letter to the theological Professors at Yale College, in order to show the entire insufficiency and uselessness of all metaphysical theories, to help us to understand the word of God. I there suggested, that when Paul said to the Corinthians, “When I came unto you, I came not with excellency of speech, *or of wisdom*, declaring unto you the testimony of God,” he meant, that “he did not come as a metaphysician.” I was attempting to confute the Professors in their philosophical speculations, by showing that in what the apostle said of the Greeks, it was evident that he spoke disparagingly of such methods of searching after religious truth. Professor Goodrich made no reply to these suggestions, which I supported by the scriptures. Whoever reads his speculations and those of his colleagues, knows that they make great use of “the nature of things.” It seems to be their polar star, through all their voyage of metaphysical discovery. Accordingly I have strenuously opposed the aid of this “nature of things,” as totally unscriptural—nothing but the work of imagination. I had not



seen or heard of Napoleon's opinion on the subject, till eighteen months after my letter to the theological Professors was published. I readily acknowledge that my sensations were peculiar, when No. 477 of the American Tract Society was put into my hands, entitled "Napoleon's Argument for the Divinity of Christ and the Scriptures." Near the commencement of this tract are the following words: "Christianity has one advantage over all systems of philosophy and all religions; Christians do not delude themselves in regard to the nature of things. You cannot reproach them with the subtleties and artifices of those idealists, who think to solve profound theological problems by their empty dissertations. Fools! their efforts are those of the infant who tries to touch the sky with his hand, or cries to have the moon for his plaything."

Though, as I have already suggested, I knew nothing of Napoleon's argument, it contains just such views as I endeavored to exhibit to the Professors in my letter to them, though as to manner, above my ability. Who would have thought that that singular man, who, as we have been wont to conclude, was a total unbeliever, and confined his views and talents to war, blood and conquest, and to an arbitrary government over what he acquired, could teach some of the leisurely descendants of the Puritans the true and only theology of the Bible, the Christian religion; and (doubtless without design) administer to them a just, a seasonable, and severe reproof. It is one of the wonders of the nineteenth century—of any age. It is enough to put many a self-confident theologian to the blush. With what directness and accuracy did that extraordinary man, Napoleon Bonaparte, study the Bible on entirely Protestant principles, and subject the vain inventions of men to that infallible standard of truth, though he was the head of a Catholic nation! How came he to be so familiar with just such speculations as are common among us; where the "nature of things"—what is totally unknown to the Bible is deemed so essential, and where such efforts are made "to solve profound theological problems by empty dissertations?" Why, if the suggestion did not involve an impossibility, I should be inclined to believe that he was thoroughly acquainted with New Divinity—that he had even lived in Connecticut.

It is with great satisfaction, that I find the American Tract Society have adopted his views and are willing to *speak out*. Through him they can exclaim concerning those who attempt "to solve profound theological problems by empty dissertations: Fools! their efforts are those of the infant who tries to touch the sky with his hand, or cries to have the moon for his plaything." Dear brethren, the publishing committee of the American Tract Society, composed of different denomina-

tions ! Go on with your blessed work of teaching the Bible, and nothing but the Bible ; and spread your millions of the leaves from the tree of life over the world to heal the nations. These leaves, if rightly applied, will take down the swellings and puffings of pride and vain deceit. Go on, with the promises of God for your encouragement. He says : “ Them that honor me, I will honor.” “ Be ye strong, therefore, and let not your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded.”

It seems, however, that with all the accuracy of Napoleon, on one point his information failed him. He says : “ Christians do not delude themselves with the nature of things. You cannot reproach them with the subtleties and artifices of those idealists,” &c. No doubt this was strictly true as far as his observations extended ; and that he took it for granted, that no believers in the Bible could see the least occasion or propriety to leave the plain teachings of that infallible book, for the flimsy efforts of man’s wisdom. No doubt, he was accustomed to hear much about “ the nature of things” among freethinkers, and no where else ; and therefore he took it for granted, that no Christians would ever think of resorting to unrevealed speculative notions, for the purpose of adding anything to the sufficient, perfect revelation, which God has made, and made without man’s help.

But the result of our observations in this country is different from that which it is believed followed the observations of Napoleon. Here it is asserted, that “ there is a standard of right and wrong *in the nature of things*, to which God is conformed, and to which all his works and ways are conformed :” “ Some standard of right, to which all his ways are conformed, and which is not in mere will.” And it is thought, that God appeals to this standard of right, this nature of things, when he reasons with the children of men. It seems, according to some speculatists, that God is not satisfied, and thinks we need not be satisfied, with his declaration, that “ He is the Rock, his work is perfect ; for all his ways are judgment : a God of truth without iniquity, just and right, is he.” And being dissatisfied himself, and allowing us to be dissatisfied with him, as the infallible standard of right, to whom it is safe to appeal, we are taught to call up “ a nature of things,” not from the Bible, for it is not there, but from the chaotic regions of speculation, and put it forward as the highest court of appeal, to which God appears on the one side, and man on the other, to decide between them what is right, and what is wrong. This doctrine of the nature of things teaches, also, that the standard of right is not “ in mere will,” that is, the will of God. Indeed ! What, then, is meant, where it is said of God, that he “ worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” It is *his*

*own will*, not the will of the nature of things—not the will of laws out of himself which he cannot control. The *counsel*, too, by which God works all things, is the *counsel* of his own will. Not the counsel—not the obstinacy of the nature of things, to which his will must be conformed. God has no foreign master whose dictates he is obliged to obey. Who does not know, that the term, *own*, is always emphatical in such a connection? If these words do not teach, that God worketh all things after the counsel of *his own will*, exclusive of any other being or thing, or supposed or imagined being or thing, in the universe, then we can have no confidence in words to express ideas; and to save us from imposition, it is no matter how soon we abandon them, and become perpetual mutes. Again, God says: “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.” If I understand these words, they do *not* say, I will have mercy on whom the nature of things will allow me to have mercy. When Christ, in his extreme agony in the garden, prayed, “Abba, Father, all things are possible with thee: take away this cup from me: nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt”—“not my will but thine be done;” I believe, beyond all doubt, that he did resolve every thing *ultimately* into the will of his Father: and it can be nothing short of charging him with deceptive words in that most awful hour, to suppose that he knew there was a nature of things, fate-like, not under the perfect control of his Father’s will. And what do we read, Luke, 10; 21? “In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.” Oh, it would have turned the sweetness of submission into gall, in old Puritan Christians, if they had been obliged to believe, that instead of submitting to the unrestricted will of God as their ultimate resort, they must submit to him as to one who is also *under* authority: who is eternally restricted to a nature of things, a blind fate that dictates without intelligence!

“Human rebellion and wickedness oppose themselves to a work of grace in our world, and hindrances to salvation *which the God of grace cannot wholly overcome.*” Here is fate enough. Such is the teaching of one, who has been following out the nature of things. This doctrine is obviously opposed to that numerous class of texts which assert the supremacy of God. Take a few, among the various examples which might be produced. God repeatedly says of himself that he is the first and the last. But it could not be so, if he must be conformed to the nature of things in all his ways. *That* would be the first and the last to limit him eternally. Of Christ it is said: “And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” No: this cannot be, if he as

God must be conformed in all his ways to the nature of things. Of Christ as God it is said again : " Who is over all, God blessed forever." But no: if he must in all his ways be conformed to the nature of things, then the nature of things is of course over him. Not over him as an intelligent agent, but over him as blind fate ; and this is precisely the doctrine of many who have not believed in Christianity, or who at least have not been much influenced by it. If you speak to them about a preparation for death, the response is, that we must all submit to fate. This badge of heathenism is substantially the same as the nature of things. They both attempt to point us beyond God, and to the same emptiness, wind and confusion.

The pretense of an appeal to the nature of things is as unnecessary as it is unscriptural ; for an oath is an appeal, and the highest kind of appeal, both for man and for God. In an oath, man appeals to God, and God appeals to himself. It is *generally* understood, that man appeals to God. Hence the form of an oath makes God the last resort for us, and so it does in relation to himself. His infinite wisdom has seen several occasions, when it was proper for him to take an oath. Isa. 45 ; 23 : " I have sworn by myself." Jer. 49 ; 13 : " For I have sworn by myself, saith the Lord." Jer. 51 ; 14 : " The Lord of hosts hath sworn by himself." Amos, 4 ; 2 : " The Lord God hath sworn by his holiness." Ps. 89 ; 35 : " Once have I sworn by my holiness." When Abraham performed that extraordinary act of obedience, (Gen. 22 ; 16.) in proceeding to offer up Isaac, till he was stopped ; " By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son." Now the inspired writers very often refer to this oath, which Jehovah made to confirm the Abrahamic covenant. Shall we, then, seek after something for God to appeal to, in reasoning with us, better than himself? Before we do thus, let us hear *his* own opinion on the subject. As a reason why he should appeal to himself in this manner, it is said, Heb. 6 ; 13, 14 : " For when God made promise to Abraham, *because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself*, saying, surely blessing I will bless thee ; and multiplying I will multiply thee." In verse 16, it is said : " For men verily swear by the greater." Why then do not men and God swear by " the nature of things," if this is the most proper appeal ; if it is the greater ? Why swear by the less, when the end of all strife is to swear by the greater ? Appeal to the nature of things instead of appealing to God ! The question, how metaphysicians have found something in a purely ideal " Nature of things," which is so solid, which is immutable in so high a sense as that the eternal, immutable God must be conformed to it, deserves a little attention.



It seems, that because God has for wise and benevolent purposes, so fitted to our minds mathematical truths, axioms, first principles, self-evident propositions, &c., and so fitted our minds to them, that, in our common state, we cannot conceive how they should bear any other relations to us than they *do* bear, some have thought that they are arbitrarily and eternally independent of God. That they are in such a sense, beside him, before him, above him, and beyond him, as that he is absolutely obliged to conform to them, and that they do sometimes so cross his wishes, as that he *cannot* do what he would be very glad to do if he could. But it appears to me that multitudes of facts, in the course of divine Providence, entirely overset all such schemes. (I had not turned my attention to the application of such facts, when I wrote my fifth Letter, in which is this sentence: "Of all this we know nothing.") When the Lord permits the mind to fall into a certain state, as in dreams, and insanity, it is not uncommon that the subject clearly perceives things to be consistent, which in a common state of mind appear absurd and self-contradictory. Physicians and other attendants on deranged people, can relate many instances of this kind. Things are viewed in a light entirely opposite to that in which they are viewed when awake, and in health. It will be proper to notice a few cases, as specimens; not that they are more remarkable than multitudes of others.

An able and pious preacher was taken deranged in such a way, that he fully believed he had left this world, and was an inhabitant of the future world. Though all his thoughts, and reasonings, on this subject, were nothing but absurdity, yet every thing appeared consistent to him, and it was beyond the power of any one who conversed with him, to catch him in any inconsistency with himself. On other topics he was rational.

A worthy lady in a state of derangement, while in company with several, stated many interesting things which took place—things which deeply involved characters; while nothing of the kind was transacted. After she was restored to soundness of mind, she had the clearest recollection of what she thought she had witnessed; and as the scene involved much, it was a delicate subject in the family. Great efforts were made to convince her that it was utterly impossible for those things to take place which she imagined were a reality. At length her good sense led her to say, that though she never witnessed any thing in her life more clearly than this seemed—that she had a vivid recollection continually of being an eye and ear witness of the whole transaction, yet as she was but one witness, and there were several against her, she must depend upon the most evidence, and therefore believe what *others* saw and heard, rather than what *she* had seen and heard herself.

I am perfectly acquainted with the following case. A person dreamed that he was in a circle of friends in New York, when Dr. Watts was present. He was highly gratified to see him, and informed him that he wanted to converse with him concerning his sacred poetry. At that moment, the fact occurred to him, that Dr. Watts had been dead nearly a hundred years. Instantly his mind was thrown into such a state, as to perceive clearly, that *this fact made no difference*. The death of Dr. Watts many years ago in England could be a reality, and also it was a reality, that he was still alive and in New York; and the person enjoyed in his society, all he had anticipated, before it occurred to him that Dr. Watts was dead.

I conclude the reader will instantly perceive that the object in stating these cases is not to express any confidence in dreams, or in the truth of what the insane think they know, only as they exhibit the phenomena of the mind; and it appears to me they do this in such a manner, as to teach us that we know nothing about the nature of things, separate from what Jehovah has been pleased to constitute it. "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things." He who made the mind has directed, that *in its proper state* to transact the business of life, it shall not be able to conceive any thing possible but that which corresponds with mathematical demonstration: that the whole is greater than a part; that one and the same thing cannot be in more than one place, at the same time; that a thing cannot be and not be, at the same time, and the like. But only let the mind become disordered; in other words, let Jehovah be pleased, in his infinite wisdom to alter the mind, and this train of conception is broken up and changed. Then the subjects perceive, most clearly believe in, depend upon, and act according to, what in health appears most absurd, contradictory, and impossible. And they not only clearly perceive things in this light, but in numerous instances, the very thing which makes them obstinate and dangerous, is, that others are so *unreasonable* as not to believe as *they* believe,—will not see and feel what to them is self-evident, intuitively true, or false, as the case may be. "*The nature of things*," as it now appears to them, is exactly the opposite of what it seems to those whose minds are sound; that is, to those whose minds God has been pleased to adapt to the arrangements he has made for knowledge and usefulness in this life.

All the essential difference between a wild dream, and settled derangement, seems to be, that in derangement, the change of mind continues; (and God might continue the change forever, if he pleased;) while a dream is limited to the hours of sleep. Where is the person, either male or female, that has arrived to adult years, who has not experienced more or less this perverted mind in his sleep? Who has not seen intuitively,

as he thought, the reality of what seems to us when awake, to be perfect absurdities, and contradictions, and impossibilities? How often our bodies have gone with our thoughts, in an instant, to some distant country, over the seas, or around the world! Our bodies, as well as our minds were certainly there, as we believed; for we ate, and drank, and conversed, and formed plans, and carried on correspondences, &c.; in the sleep of one night, and perhaps in an hour's time. Yea, in our nightly slumbers, we have all walked, and run, and passed through distant places, and labored, and performed great feats of bodily strength, without moving hand or foot. We have been able to walk without touching any thing with our feet; we have sailed without water, and flown without wings. In our dreams, we have lived without heads; but it has not prevented us from eating, and drinking, and conversing, though without mouths; and we have of course seen without eyes, heard without ears, smelled without noses, and thought without brains. And we have seen others in the same singular plight. Yes; it was certainly so. We would have staked life for the truth of the scenes. To suppose otherwise would be contrary to the "nature of things"—"a contradiction in terms." Here is all there is to that which is thought to be before the First, and after the Last, and above the Highest; and which makes so many stare at the profoundness of its discoverers.

"Defend me, therefore, common sense, say I,  
From reveries so airy, from the toil  
Of dropping buckets into empty wells,  
And growing old in drawing nothing up."

As I have appealed to the experience of mankind, I would add that we have reason to believe the cases above specified are only as a few units to millions of a similar character which have occurred, and are occurring in the world. All such cases show how little we know of the mind, and of its infinite Author; and it seems to me we might be far better employed than to pretend to know so much concerning them. How much more befitting us to spend our time in turning the letters of the word *Ignorance* into as many figures, and multiplying them together. By such an exercise we might *possibly* be led to think more of a question at the head of this letter,—“Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?”

As it has been one of the principal objects of these Letters to the Christian Public, to test, by the word of God, all modern schemes, which aim directly or indirectly, openly or secretly, to deny, or render doubtful, or obscure, in any manner or degree, the doctrine of the absolutely supreme and eternal independence of God, I feel it my duty to notice

the views of the Rev. Edwards A. Park, Theological Professor at Andover.

I have made use of the best means I could command, to ascertain his sentiments on this fundamental principle of all religion; and if there is no mistake, (and I am desirous to make none,) he holds substantially, that God is subject to laws out of himself, and that he is embarrassed by free agency. The following is said to be verbatim as it has come from Professor Park's instructions:—"God saves all he can—would be glad to save more if he could." Admitting that this statement is correct, it is obvious, that the same objections lie against it which are against the doctrine of the Theological Professors at New Haven. God is restricted, whether we denominate that which restricts him, the nature of things, laws out of himself, free agency, or any thing else; and we may as well call it fate as any thing, for it amounts to it. It is that which limits Jehovah, aside from, or beyond his will. If it is the belief of Professor Park, *that God would be glad to save more than he can*, then he presumes to decide, that God's goodness is superior to his power; while the Westminster Catechism declares them both infinite, and of course both equal, as far as finite creatures can know any thing about them. I trust it has been abundantly shown in the course of these Letters, that according to the analogy of the scriptures, they are entirely silent, as to any limitation in God aside from his holy will. Consequently any scheme, which does not leave the subject here, is unscriptural; is entirely man's device; and *is infinitely derogatory to God*.

I consider it my duty to refer again to a passage of scripture, which I briefly noticed in Letter II. "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse." There was a flourishing church at Rome, which Paul had not seen when he wrote the epistle containing the foregoing words. It would seem natural to conclude, that as he had never preached to that church, he would, in his epistle, be somewhat systematical. So he was; and he has given a proper specimen of a theological system. As God is the sum of all existence, and the only foundation of religion, this system of theology begins with him, as all systems should. When we take a general view of the stupendous works of God, power is the *first thought* which presents itself to our minds; and it is the first view which God gives of himself—"his eternal power." It should be added, that he is perfectly consistent on this as well as on every other subject, through all his revelation to man. What, then, can be more out of place, than for us to begin beyond God in our theological schemes, and pretend to find something which cripples him? Fearing that the foundation of God



himself is not deep enough, we must pretend to dive below him, and lay our corner-stone upon some nature of things ; or upon some laws, *out of God*, not under his perfect control—upon something, which operates on God like the old heathenish notion of the decrees of fate ;—something to which *God must conform*. Having laid our corner-stone deeper and more sure than though it were upon God, we erect a chief pillar upon it, which rises above him, and we *must have it* to support our theological temple ! But it is a rotten pillar. It is like an attempt to mix iron and miry clay. It is an attempt to form an alliance between eternal realities and nonentity ; between the wisdom of God and the folly of man. “ God saves all he can—would be glad to save more if he could.” To pretend that this doctrine is any part of Calvinism, or that it is consistent with it, is a misnomer. The peculiarly distinctive feature of Calvinism, as appears in the writings of that great man, whose name it bears, and in the creeds and catechisms modeled according to them, is, that sovereign independence of God, which gives him the perfect ability and right to do all his pleasure—to do whatever his soul desireth. It makes him removed the farthest imaginable from the doctrine, that he would be glad to save more than he can, or from any other doctrine, which teaches, that he is not eternally and perfectly satisfied with his own wisdom and ability. It is mysterious to me, how men can dare, or wish, to be considered Calvinists, who, in the face of the world, introduce doctrines totally opposed to what is the most essential, and the *most obviously* essential to Calvinism. Dr. Hopkins, in carrying out the sentiments of Calvin, is very explicit in his writings generally, and particularly so, in the last sermon of a posthumous volume, in which he takes leave of the world. He states, that God will overrule for the highest possible good and happiness, all the sin and misery, which ever did, and ever will take place throughout the universe. With full confidence in such wisdom, holiness and ability in God, he professed to rejoice in view of eternal scenes, but just before him. Here his mind rested ; and here was the grand theme, which was evidently much on his heart through the whole course of his ministry. Who can discern the most distant relationship between such Calvinism, and the doctrine that “ God saves all he can, and would be glad to save more if he could ? ” The terms, by which different denominations of Christians are known, were designed solely for the purpose of marking what was peculiar in each of them. Now if a man disbelieves what is very peculiar to any particular denomination, and at the same time claims to bear the name of such denomination, he deceives the public, profess what he may, and explain as he may.

It is far from the wish of the writer unnecessarily to wound the feelings of any one ; and it would give him great pleasure to know that the

remarks just made have no proper application to the gentleman brought to view. But it accords with commendable human action, on a subject of so vast importance, to speak decidedly according to the best information we can obtain; being always willing to be corrected, if superior information will detect the error. Yet so long as the writer has evidence that his information is substantially correct, he does not intend that any considerations of learning, or talents, popularity or influence, shall deter him from stating things, just as he has reason to think they are; and he believes that for the want of such frankness, the religious public have long and grievously suffered. Professors of Theology are in a very peculiar sense the property of the church. Accordingly it is essential that all their sentiments should be of easy access to the public. *It must be so.* Before theological institutions were set up, every young gentleman had his choice as to the minister with whom he should study; and this choice was founded on the knowledge he had of the minister's sentiments. Whoever thought that theological schools would break in upon this privilege, and that it would become customary for those who would prepare for the gospel ministry, to go where there would be the least difficulty to ascertain the sentiments of the teachers on the fundamental points of all religion? The effects of what ministers teach will be felt all over the world, down to the final judgment. Hence, if there ever was, or can be, a case, which requires the most scrupulous caution, it is that pertaining to Theological Professors, who will generally instill what they believe, into the minds of their students.

I wish it here to be distinctly understood, that I am not looking for infallibility in teachers of Theology, any more than in other men; and unless I have grossly deceived myself, I have been liberal toward ministers and others, who have given me evidence that they wish to build their religious belief entirely upon the Bible. Doubtless all, (including the writer certainly,) make many and great mistakes in pursuing this course. Doubtless we all have our errors, which will cleave to us till we come "within the veil." Hence, so long as we give one another evidence, that our *whole* aim is to ground our faith entirely on the Bible, we ought to "put on charity the bond of perfectness," to be very kind, and overlook the errors of one another. Perhaps no reader of these lines commits as many blunders as myself, in attempting to find out what God says in his holy word. I hope there are none. I intend to maintain liberal feelings towards all who give evidence that they are real Bible students: that is, those who study the sacred scriptures merely as learners, that they may find out what God says to them. Those who intend to carry out the plan of the noble Bereans, who "searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so." I insist that in *all*

cases, as it was with the Bereans, the Bible must be the text book—the standard, the whole standard—it must conform to no speculative philosophy, but all speculative philosophy must conform to it. It must be the beginning, the middle, the end, the foundation and the headstone of all religious knowledge. There never was, and there never will be, any speculative knowledge, or experience, on religion, worth having, which is not grounded entirely on the Bible. Who does not instantly perceive an essential difference between this course of study or teaching, and that of calling in the aid of some “nature of things,” or of laws not entirely under God’s control, in order to modify the scriptures to our own liking? And on what subject in a theological system are such human efforts so fearful as that which strikes at the *power* of God, the very first trace, as we have seen, of his existence! To undertake to pass over, explain away, or modify that numerous class of texts, which, in their most obvious sense, are calculated to leave the deepest impression of what the great and glorious ‘I AM THAT I AM’ IS, is virtually raising the question between a God and no God. Certainly, if the scheme of modifying the word of God, by suppositions or any thing else, is allowed in relation to the attributes of Jehovah, who is the foundation of all religion, it may on the same principle, be extended to every subject even to the divine existence! There is no stopping place. I trust, therefore, it is made sufficiently plain why some cannot be satisfied to be kept in ignorance or doubt, concerning what any theological Professor believes and teaches. *They must know the whole.* They want no religious nostrums. The least concealment on the part of any one, is inconsistent with gospel simplicity and with the spirit of free-inquiry. It is stepping on to popery ground. It is, therefore, a plain duty of those who think there is sufficient reason for suspicion, to state their troubles without disguise; and if there be no efforts to relieve their minds, this inattention will be a lawful and full confirmation of the suspicion. There must be no uncertainty, no mere conjecture here. We want to know whether our beloved youth, the hope of the world, who have been consecrated to the service of God, with so many prayers and tears of their own, and of their parents, are sent abroad to learn to teach the old gospel in its purity and power, or whether the seeds of man’s devices may not possibly be scattered, here and there, which, if sown, will come up sooner or later, and surely produce a harvest of tares.

I deeply regret the manner in which the pretended “Philosophy of religion” is treated in these days of boasted light, as though nothing censurable were to be attached to it. Must we pass over as mere peccadillos the monstrous liberties taken with the name and word of Almighty God, by the wisdom of man, because it assumes the enchanting

name of "Philosophy of Religion;" Is the "Philosophy of Religion" consecrated to be the sanctuary of error? We hear, "whatever be the Philosophy of religion among ministers," as though this were a matter of as much indifference, as what coats they wear. "The Philosophy of Religion, alias Philosophy and vain deceit," alias that "Wisdom of this world which is foolishness with God," never was, and never will be satisfied with "the simplicity that is in Christ." Had it not been for its exorbitant demands, Martin Luther would not have been obliged to go to Worms under circumstances of so great self-denial, and there, before the gaze, and pomp, and hatred of the power, and despotism of the world, and at the risk of his life, declare his belief in the scriptures, as the only and sufficient rule of faith and practice. This glorious principle has been vindicated at too dear a rate to allow the least infringement of it to be smoothed over: and I trust that every attempt at it will meet a prompt rebuke, so long as any Protestant blood shall flow in our veins.

My soul loathes all the high pretensions to love and zeal for the word of God, by any, who make its sacred truths, in any degree, directly or indirectly, by declaration or implication, subservient to the vain reasonings of men—Who, while they extol it to the skies, would kick it about like a foot-ball, rather than lose an iota of human invention, or one coruscation of fancy. If we are indeed Protestants, let us carry out the fundamental principle of Protestantism. If we are not, let us say so and keep nothing back. And if we are partly Protestants, and partly not, and like those children, who "spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews language," let us still own our pedigree, and not attempt to deceive people.



## LETTER XXI.

PSALM 119; 160.—“THY WORD IS TRUE FROM THE BEGINNING; AND EVERY ONE OF THY RIGHT-  
 EOUS JUDGMENTS ENDURETH FOREVER.” Ps. 12; 6.—“THE WORDS OF THE LORD ARE PURE  
 WORDS, AS SILVER TRIED IN A FURNACE OF EARTH, PURIFIED SEVEN TIMES.” JER. 18; 14.—  
 “WILL A MAN LEAVE THE SNOW OF LEBANON, WHICH COMETH FROM THE ROCK OF THE  
 FIELD? OR SHALL THE COLD FLOWING WATERS THAT COME FROM ANOTHER PLACE BE  
 FORSAKEN?” JER. 15; 16.—“THY WORDS WERE FOUND AND I DID EAT THEM; AND THY WORD  
 WAS UNTO ME THE JOY AND REJOICING OF MY HEART.”

I KNOW not how we can place sufficient confidence in the Bible for our guide to heaven, unless we receive what it contains as a system of facts. To do this, it is necessary to be entirely satisfied with the evidences which are brought to prove its divine origin—that it is indeed the word of God. This essential point being settled in our minds, what next we have to do is to ascertain what the word of God contains, and admit it as composing a system of truth, of facts. We must come to this conclusion, in relation to all the doctrines it contains; to its precepts and institutions, to its histories and prophecies, and to its promises and threatenings. Nothing short of this can make a man a real believer in divine revelation. But if such be our faith, we are prepared to build our theological system wholly on the Bible. In this case, we have what we consider the proof of facts for all we believe; and facts are the ground of all evidence. But it is a question sometimes agitated, whether we must not have some philosophy to interpret the scriptures? I answer, yes, if by philosophy is intended simply the philosophy there is in language. I know of no other, unless by it is intended also, that exercise of the mental faculties which is necessary to investigate any subject, and collect evidence respecting it. But, if by philosophy is intended some particular scheme adopted to study the subjects in the Bible, different from what is necessary to study any other book, I answer, No. What other philosophy than that which belongs to language, does the child need to understand his parents, or the parent to understand his children? What other philosophy do any of us need to understand each other in the social and business concerns of life? What other philosophy than that which language affords, do our children need to understand their school books, their Sabbath school lessons, or any other book which they read? What philosophy, but that which belongs to language, do we need, to understand sermons or lectures on

any subject? Does a jury need some particular philosophical scheme, beyond the philosophy in language, in order to understand the facts which the witnesses give in their testimony? Or do they need any other philosophy to enable them to understand the charge, which the judge gives them. Does the lawyer, who has truth on his side, need any particular philosophical scheme, to assist him to make the facts intelligible to the court, the jury, and the spectators? No. What then is intended by having some philosophy, beside that which belongs to language, in order to study the scriptures successfully?

It may here be suggested, that what are termed the rules of exegesis are necessary to ascertain the meaning of the scriptures. This is true; but the rules of exegesis are simply the result of experience, and belong to no one philosophical scheme more than to another. They point out to us the most direct and sure method of coming at facts. They apply to any other book as well as to the Bible. The only difference is, that as the subjects in the Bible are more numerous and complicated than in most other books, more exegetical rules are necessary. This remark may be illustrated by the different Wills and Testaments which are left by the deceased. One of them has so few subjects and circumstances, that its meaning is clearly perceived as we read it. Another is very complicated; and of course requires more rules of interpretation: but if all the rules are correctly applied, the real mind of the testator is certainly known. In all this I can discern no necessity for any special, philosophical scheme. Just so it is in relation to the interpretation of the sacred scriptures. Those rules of exegesis which may be found necessary, are always at command; and they are such as are dictated by experience and common sense. They show us how we may discover the Will of the great Testator—*how to come at the facts in the Bible*. I will not omit to remark in this place, that when I speak of the means of obtaining the sense of the scriptures, I always include prayer.

The question, then, returns; what necessity is there for any philosophy beside that which belongs to language, in order to come at the facts in the Bible? I answer, *None*. Lest I should be misunderstood, I would say, that in reasoning upon the scriptures by way of applying them to a particular case, *after the meaning is ascertained*, philosophy, that is, some special mode of reasoning comes in; but this is entirely distinct from ascertaining the truth, that is, the facts, of the scriptures. If I do not myself mistake, we are now come to one of the greatest and most disastrous mistakes committed in relation to the Bible; which is, that instead of trying to find out the truths of that sacred book by comparing its parts together, as we know we must do in relation to all other books, we adopt some scheme to make it comport with our preconceived

notions. This reverses the whole plan of studying the Bible ; and instead of making it our teacher, we apply it simply to prove what we imagine our own wisdom first discovered. Now it is not wonderful, that if this is our practice, we should need some philosophy, some special philosophical scheme, to assist us in studying the Bible. In this case we are like the lawyer, on the side opposite to that which contains the facts. *He* must have some special scheme, some hypothesis, some unsound positions, on which to display his skill, and deceive the jury, if he can. But all his antagonist has to do is to come at the facts, and arrange them in the most proper manner, and then bring forward the inevitable conclusions. He has no need of metaphysics, chicanery, double dealing, studied obscurities, and ambiguities. All is simple, plain, direct, and conclusive. The Bible is that good case—full of facts, simple, plain, easy of access, easy to understand ; that is, excepting what must, in God's book, lie beyond our comprehension. What possible need, then, is there to study any philosophy in order to understand the Bible, except that which we necessarily acquire in the knowledge of language, and add to it *common sense* ? If it is necessary for the student in theology to adopt some special philosophy to find out what God has said in his word, it is necessary for the same purpose, that the Sabbath School scholar, and even the child at home, should have such philosophy to study the Bible ; else they will begin wrong, and what knowledge they acquire will prove to be worse than none. In this case, our Sabbath Schools would be nothing but schools of error, and the student in divinity must unlearn all he had acquired in them.

An impartial jury further illustrate the point I have in view. They are men of plain sense, being generally taken from the common occupations of life. It is never made a question whether they have studied metaphysics. Their special business is to come at facts. This they must do, however complicated the case originally may have been, and however entangled those lawyers make it by their theories, and hypotheses, and quibbles, who have not the truth to sustain them. Now since the Bible is a collection of facts, it needs men of just such qualifications, (no matter how much learning they have,) to explain it ; and to explain it on the same principles they apply to understand any other book. This is the way in which godly men, of every age, have learned what God has said for their good. "Thy word is true from the beginning." Neither Abraham, nor Nqah, nor Enoch, nor Abel, had or needed any special philosophy to make God's truth appear plainer to them, than it did appear ; and Abel, the first saint in Adam's race, is a demonstration that God's word is true from the beginning, and that it needs no "philosophy and vain deceit," to mystify it, or modify it.

When we read that "The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times," we perceive reference is had to the severe tests to which the Bible has been put ; and that they have all served to make its sacred truths appear the more glorious. The three leading, most severe tests to which the word of God has been subjected, are, Jewish traditions, Infidelity, and that "Philosophy and vain deceit," to which Paul refers in Col. 2 ; 8. Indeed this philosophy was concerned in the traditions of the Jews, and in the commandments of men, which they taught for doctrines. The proper explanation of this philosophy is, *that which leads men to determine to be wise, in some form, above what is written.* This was the determination of the Jewish Scribes and Pharisees, when they taught for doctrines the commandments of men. This is the determination, of course, among all rejecters of the Bible. We may know that this philosophy was doing mischief in the time of the apostles, from the direction which Paul gave the Colossians: "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." This philosophy was not after Christ, but it turned the mind from him, after the tradition and rudiments of the world, under the pretence of being wise. Surely every generation has witnessed such things. The desire to be wise above what is written, was concerned in the "endless genealogies," and "old wives' fables," which Paul noticed when writing to Timothy. But it seems according to Mosheim, that Ammonius, who lived in the second century, did more than any of his predecessors since the Christian era, to corrupt the word of God by philosophy. Mosheim says in his Ecclesiastical History, Vol. 1, page 139, "The propensity of Ammonius to singularity and paradox, led him to maintain, that all the Gentile religions, and even the Christian, were to be illustrated and explained by the principles of this universal philosophy." This was like the opening of Pandora's box. Such philosophy, together with what improvements were occasionally made to it, proved sufficient so to wrest the scriptures, as to darken the world ; and with other agencies, it prepared the way to lock them up from the common people. This was done lest some should interpret them in accordance with the common use of language, and expose the absurdities and heresies, and abominations of the priests, and cardinals, and popes. The great essential point, which was gained by the Reformation, in the time of Luther and Calvin was, to convince the world, that the Bible itself, without the aid of philosophy, is the sufficient rule of faith and practice. This is Protestantism. It did seem for a while, that philosophy and vain deceit, that is, the itching to be wise above what is written, that is, man's determination to help Jehovah to make his own word, had



received a fatal blow. But it appears that now, May 1850, the relics of old philosophical schemes, combined with the modern German and American philosophy, and the discovery, that "every man has his philosophy back of his theology," are engaged in a regular siege against the commonsense of man on the subject of theology. One of the formidable enemies, which these combined forces have to encounter is, the formulas, and creeds, and catechisms of the old Puritans. According to some, theological science has improved so much as to alter the meaning of words, so that we must not understand our creeds and catechisms as they read. Thus we are told, that if a man "holds the doctrine of the Trinity in manner and form as defined in the Westminster and larger Catechisms, he holds a doctrine which the prevalent Theology of New England has rejected as unscriptural and absurd." (Those who believe in this statement are, I think, Unitarians of course. "Nature will out,") The men who use such language concerning the symbols of that glorious doctrine which we call the Trinity—symbols, which as well define it as any other, and which long usage has rendered so venerable, are most probably enemies to the doctrine itself. If not, they are accountable for using such words, as a very little reflection would teach them, are calculated to unsettle the minds of their readers on the doctrine. If they had the least belief in the doctrine, would they not be more cautious? Flirting at the creeds we sign: look at it! look at it!

Also, I have seen in print the following sentiment, as nearly as I am able to describe it. There is a wonderful elasticity in words, which corresponds with the knowledge of the reader. This is supposed to be necessary in order to have the Bible keep up with the times. When a person reads the Bible, who has made no improvement beyond old times, the words will contain nothing but the old sense. But when a person reads, who has kept up with the "rapid march of mind," the words being "elastic," *swell up* to correspond with the vast improvement of the reader, somewhat, I conclude, like the proboscis of an elephant, when he is trusting "he can draw up Jordan into his mouth."

Again. As the true meaning of an orthodox creed will be prominent in the words which have hitherto been employed in stating it, I understand the great desideratum of some vast improvers of the age is, so to frame language, that it will retain just as much meaning of the orthodox creeds, as suits the taste of the writer, and no more. Miserable, ridiculous, contemptible! Who can have patience with such things?

We have already examined hypothetical theology, which enables those who adopt it to sign an orthodox creed without the least scruple; but reserve a doubt to modify it, and the scriptures, to their liking. If this is honesty, what is dishonesty?

Another method to be rid of troublesome doctrines is, to call in the aid

of learned criticism ; and by a process, which those unacquainted with the original languages of the Bible cannot gainsay, but which is interested and partial, oblige that sacred book to teach error.

Where so many are most zealously engaged in making improvements in theological science, and in producing a corresponding reform, it may be expected, that some will be in advance of others. I understand, that one division of reformers fearlessly maintain, that the Bible itself does not come up to the times. I detest the sentiment, but admire the honesty. If all would be equally frank, we should know much better where we are, and what to do.

With respect to the doctrine, that "every man has his philosophy back of his theology," I would observe, that such a notion encourages as many philosophical schemes as there are individuals ; and of course as many theological schemes as philosophical. What a Babel this opinion is calculated to erect ! Yea, it would prove itself a true descendant of Ishmael. "And he will be a wild man ; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him."

In noticing such wild, fanciful schemes on religion, when all have the Bible in their hands, it ought to lead us seriously to reflect how unwilling mankind are to subject their wisdom to the wisdom of God, and to have "every thought brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ." Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon, which cometh from the rock of the field ? or shall the cold flowing waters of another place be forsaken ?

The most essential truths in the Bible, and such as have been the most precious to God's children, are embodied in our creeds. Why then should any of those who have signed such creeds, and who are willing to be known as prominent theologians, labor to cast these truths into the shade ? This seems like forsaking the refreshing waters which come from the rock of the field. It seems like growing tired of the old stereotyped light of the sun and moon, and determining to perform our business hereafter with the help of glow-worms and lightning-bugs. And after all, what do such ways accomplish ? What great point is gained ? "shall any teach God knowledge ?" If it be the design of fleshly wisdom to try the words of the Lord any more, it may be assured that they do not need any new test, for they are already "as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." All may be certain, however, that any new test to which they think proper to subject the word of God, so far from injuring it, will make it appear more pure and glorious. But they will need a caution, lest in so doing, they should "kick against the pricks:" and their violent dealing should come down upon their own heads.

"Thy words were found and I did eat them ; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." This was Jeremiah's experi-

ence, and it is the experience of all God's people in their best frames. Said the Psalmist, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea sweeter than honey to my mouth!" Every Christian, in his most devotional frame, not only cheerfully subscribes to such views of the word, but he feels them, and feels them deeply. He wants the sentiments of the pure word of God, without the least alloy. He is satisfied with nothing short of what Paul said he and his brethren taught, as appears in 1 Cor. 2 ; 13. "Which things also we speak, not in the words which *man's wisdom teacheth*, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth ; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." When it is said, "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth," it is evident that these words of man's wisdom are not the right preaching of the gospel. Jehovah would not speak disparagingly of an institution he has established. No doubt uninspired gospel ministers have their errors, as they are all imperfect. But when they make it a paramount object to state, explain and apply the word of God, after having studied it carefully, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual," they stand in a very different relation to God and to their hearers from those who think they must spice their sermons with their own wisdom. Those Christians, who are determined to imitate the noble Bereans, do, after hearing ministers preach, search the scriptures to see "whether these things were so ;" and they want to find a "Thus saith the Lord," for all the assertions they hear in the pulpit. Dr. Emmons once said to the writer, to this effect,—“Make it a rule to quote largely from the Bible in your sermons ; and remember that they will be weighty in proportion to the quantity of scripture, which is pertinently introduced.” This direction has become more and more precious to me, the longer I have lived. The eagerness of Christians for the pure words of the Lord, in the most serious hours of life, was strikingly exemplified in a pious man of my acquaintance, who died of the consumption in the prime of life. He had used, and was satisfied with, Scott's Commentary, when in health. When he had become very feeble, as he desired his wife one day to read to him from the scriptures, he told her she need not read Scott's notes as she had often done ; for of late he had felt better satisfied to hear *the word of God itself*, and it seemed to him that he wanted to hear no other reading, not even Scott's notes. Ah ! how long do those ministers expect their hearers will live, who deal out their *philosophy* to them, such as the Bible has nothing to do with ! And how long do they expect to live themselves !

It is a melancholy token of the decay of piety, that so many unscriptural speculations are encouraged in the country, as having anything to do with sound theology. They are taught in some of the professed schools of the prophets, and in the pulpit. The press is groaning be-

neath them, and they are spreading over the country in all directions, and of course have their readers wherever they are sent.

Three prominent traits in modern speculations on religion are, ingratitude, conceitedness, and irreverence. We, miserable, ruined sinners, deserving no good at the hand of God, are nevertheless favored with a complete revelation from him, which teaches us all we know, on whatever pertains to himself, to ourselves, and to life and godliness. How ungrateful, then, in us, to be unwilling to take this revelation just as it is given, and determine to judge over it, as though we were the appointed umpires over God himself. Is this the way to requite the Lord, for his infinite condescension and love? Is it not rather our part, with thankful hearts to make it our great object to find out what God has said, and to be reconciled to it, and not, with the "fleshly mind," to teach what *God must say*?

What I intend by conceitedness, as manifested in modern speculations, is comprehended in *vain deceit*. I have already noticed, that while some have been charged with philosophy and vain deceit, no refutation has been attempted, though *other* topics have been closely examined.

But when we come to that want of reverence of God which has so strongly marked modern speculations, what shall be said? How many expressions have been used to show God's inability to do things, when the whole tenor of the argument has been that it would have been desirable to do so and so, if he could? How low, has the infinite Jehovah been put; even far beneath man! How far on the back ground has the Holy Spirit been thrown in relation to his official work in renewing the hearts of sinners! None of the opposers of such speculations have claimed to be prophets; but some of them believed many years ago, that such treatment of God's word and of the sacred Trinity, would not be forgotten; and such a dearth of revivals of religion followed as was expected. To a part of the religious community, however, this dearth *was unexpected*; and though religious periodicals have abounded in the supposed causes of the great calamity, yet none of them have to my knowledge, assigned what some have very seriously believed to be the principal cause: viz. the treatment the Heavenly Dove has extensively received. And oh! have not some friends to truth feared to speak out! The doctrine had been zealously urged, that the official work of the Holy Spirit would not be necessary, if man would do what he is able to perform; and that God had already done all he could for the salvation of sinners, while they remained in impenitence. (In me such pretended preaching of the gospel would be blasphemy.) But after it appeared that this plan would not succeed, then we heard strong things said to show the dependence of sinners on the Holy Ghost; while, as I have



plainly showed on pages 22d and 23d of my printed Letter to the Theological Professors at New Haven, and without a word of objection from Dr. Goodrich, that the Holy Spirit has no *inherent* power to convert and save men forever in heaven ; but must depend upon the miseries of the damned to form a sufficient motive to deter holy beings from apostatizing ! This shipwreck made of the work of the Holy Spirit on the hearts of men in the nineteenth century, with the Bible in our hands, and where there is not a little congratulation at our superior privileges and advancement in religious knowledge, is one among many shocking things which have been inflicted upon us by means of unscriptural speculations on Theology. O, that the tone of conscientious piety were raised to the height it was enjoyed at Ephesus, when “ Many of them also which used curious arts, brought their books together, and burned them before all men.” God will not wink at such management as modern speculations have occasioned.

While I was about writing some of these last paragraphs, another mode still of interpreting the scriptures came to my knowledge, the substance of which is, *that some of the scriptures were designed to express sentiment, and some to express emotion, that it will not answer to attempt to prove any doctrine by those texts which simply express emotion.* The design of this rule of interpreting the Bible, was probably to please every body ; for every body is to be his own judge as to what texts contain sentiment, and what were written to express emotion. At least every body will be his own judge. So any one can make out of the Bible just what his fancy dictates. For example : one may imagine, that what David said, Ps. 51 ; 5. “ Behold I was shapen in iniquity ; and in sin did my mother conceive me,” is purely the language of emotion ; and of course was not designed to prove any doctrine. The same may be imagined concerning what is said in Job 14 ; 4. “ Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean ? not one.” The same may be said concerning Job 25 ; 4. “ How can he be clean that is born of a woman ?” Also, if such a rule of interpreting the scriptures should be encouraged, what Paul says in Romans fifth chapter, to show the connection between the sin of Adam and of his posterity, would very soon be set down as the language of emotion, rather than of sentiment. In this way, the doctrine of native depravity and original sin, would be expunged from the Bible very quick. So it would be of every other doctrine not relished by the human heart. Particularly would the doctrine of the eternal punishment of the wicked be brought into danger. It is well known, that those who deny this doctrine, try to prove, that those passages of scripture, which are brought to sustain it, if understood in the sense designed by those who produce them, make God

inexorable and revengeful, speaking from the impulse of passion, and the like. Let Universalists, then, be made acquainted with this new rule of explaining the Bible, and they will thank the author of it for his discovery. It is just what they have been pleading for. How glorious to have such a scheme put forth by the orthodox !

Is it not time that we give up all such chimerical notions about the way to understand the Bible, and settle down upon the only rule given by inspiration ; which is, *to compare spiritual things with spiritual* ? What other rule can we believe the noble Bereans adopted, who “searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so ?” This simple rule has been sufficient for all the pious, in humble stations, since the word of God was first given to men. They have had hope through “*patience* and comfort of the scriptures.” (Rom. 15 ; 4.) They have not expected to learn every thing at once. When they have found things in the scriptures which they could not understand, they have chosen rather to wait upon God in prayer, and a diligent study of them in the way they prescribe, than to make rules which shall bring them down to a human standard. In this way they have often found the word of God wonderfully opened to them. Such obedience to God and to his word is unspeakably better than all the parade of great learning, and wit, and “fleshy wisdom” combined.

In Isa. 23 ; 9, it is said, “The Lord of hosts hath purposed to stain the pride of all glory ;” and in the second chapter it is repeatedly said, “And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day.” I must believe that the fulfillment of such predictions comprehends the renunciation of all attempts among theologians to be wise above what is written, or, in any respects, to bring the word of God down to the standard of “fleshy wisdom.” The millennium will never be established—the glory of the Lord will never be so revealed as that all flesh shall see it together, (Isa. 40 ; 5,) till such renunciation shall be complete ; till all theories contrived to study the scriptures which shall conflict in the least with “comparing spiritual things with spiritual” shall be torn up, “root and branch.” The reason is obvious. All such schemes throw us off the gospel track ; they “corrupt the word of God” by turning away the mind “from the simplicity that is in Christ.” They are rebellion against “bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ,” and of course *they will not stand*—THEY CANNOT STAND FOR GOD IS NOT IN THEM.



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